The Ramakrishna Mission
Institute of Culture Library

Presented by

Dr. Baridbaran Mukerji

RMICL—8

11822


LIBRARY

ESSAYS

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

εὑρετικὸν εἶναί φασι τὴν ἐρημίαν.

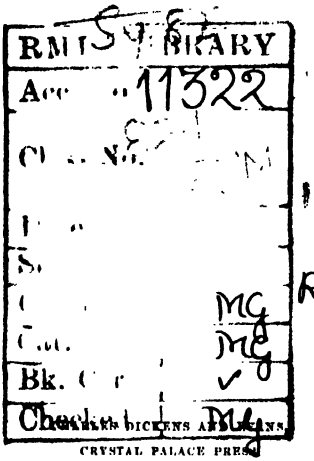
In Two Volumes.

VOL. II.

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL,

LIMITED.

1890.


RMI
BRARY
Acc
11322
RC
MG
MG
Bk.
Check
MG
CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS
CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS

CONTENTS.

NOTES ON STYLE:

PAGE

PART III.—PERSONAL STYLE 1

PART IV.—THE ART OF STYLE 11

DEMOCRATIC ART. WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WALT WHITMAN 30

LANDSCAPE 78

NATURE MYTHS AND ALLEGORIES 126

IS POETRY AT BOTTOM A CRITICISM OF LIFE? A REVIEW OF MATTHEW ARNOLD'S SELECTION FROM WORDSWORTH 150

PAGE

IS MUSIC THE TYPE OR MEASURE OF ALL ART? 18

THE PATHOS OF THE ROSE IN POETRY . 197

A COMPARISON OF ELIZABETHAN WITH VICTORIAN POETRY 225

APPENDIX:

DARWIN'S THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD 281

THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE 285

NOTES ON THEISM 291

THE CRITERION OF ART 297

NOTE ON "REALISM AND IDEALISM" . . . 299

NOTE ON "THE MODEL" 304

PRIORITY OF THOUGHT TO LANGUAGE . . . 306

COLOUR-SENSE AND LANGUAGE 307

ESSAYS

SPECULATIVE AND SUGGESTIVE.

NOTES ON STYLE—*Continued.*

Part III.

PERSONAL STYLE.

I.

A SURVEY of language, however superficial, makes it evident that when we speak of style, we have to take into account those qualities of national character which are embodied in national speech. If two men could be born of precisely the same physical, mental, and moral nature, at precisely the same moment of history, and under precisely the same social conditions; and if these men learned different languages in the cradle, and used those languages in after life, they would be unable to deliver exactly the same message to the world through literature. The dominant qualities of each mother-tongue would impose definite limitations on their

power of expressing thoughts, however similar or identical those thoughts might be.

We cannot conceive two men born with the same physical, mental, and moral nature, at the same moment, under precisely the same conditions, and using the same language. They would be identical; and everything they uttered would be clothed with exactly the same words. The absurdity of this conception brings home to us the second aspect of style. Style is not merely a sign of those national qualities which are generic to established languages, and which constitute the so-called genius of a race. It is also the sign of personal qualities, specific to individuals, which constitute the genius of a man. Whatever a man utters from his heart and head is the index of his character. The more remarkable a person is, the more strongly he is differentiated from the average of human beings, the more salient will be the characteristic notes of his expression. But even the commonest people have, each of them, a specific style. The marks of difference become microscopical as we descend from Dante or Shakespeare to the drudges of the clerk's desk in one of our great cities. Yet these marks exist, and are no less significant of individuality than the variations between leaf and leaf upon the lime-trees of an avenue.

It may be asked whether the manner of expression peculiar to any person is a complete index

to his character—whether, in other words, there is "an art to find the mind's construction" in the style. Not altogether and exhaustively. Not all the actions and the utterances of an individual betray the secret of his personality. You may live with men and women through years, by day, by night, yet you will never know the whole about them. No human being knows the whole about himself.

The deliberate attitude adopted by a literary writer implies circumspection; invites suppression, reservation, selection; is compatible with affectation, dissimulation, hypocrisy. So much cannot be claimed for critical analysis as that we should pretend to reproduce a man's soul after close examination of his work. What we may assert with confidence is that the qualities of style are intimately connected with the qualities and limitations of the writer, and teach us much about him. He wrote thus and thus, because he was this or this. In the exercise of style it is impossible for any one to transcend his inborn and acquired faculties of ideation, imagination, sense-perception, verbal expression—just as it is impossible in the exercise of strength for an athlete to transcend the limits of his physical structure, powers of innervation, dexterity and courage.* The work of art produced by a writer

* See Émile Hennequin, "La Critique Scientifique," pp. 64–67, for a full and luminous exposition of these points.

is therefore, of necessity, complexioned and determined by the inborn and acquired faculties of the individual. This is what we mean by the hackneyed epigram: "Le style c'est l'homme."

II.

Certain broad distinctions of moral and emotional temperament may undoubtedly be detected in literary style. A tendency toward exaggeration, toward self-revelation, toward emphasis upon the one side; a tendency to reserve, to diminished tone in colouring, to parsimony of rhetorical resource upon the other; these indicate expansiveness or reticence in the writer. Victor Hugo differs by the breadth of the whole heavens from Leopardi. One man is ironical by nature, another sentimental. Sterne and Heine have a common gift of humour; but the quality of humour in each case is conditioned by sympathetic or by caustic under-currents of emotion. Sincerity and affectation, gaiety and melancholy, piety and scepticism, austerity and sensuality penetrate style so subtly and unmistakably that a candid person cannot pose as the mere slave of convention, a boon companion cannot pass muster for an anchorite, the founder of a religious sect cannot play the part of an agnostic. In dramatic work the artist creates characters alien from his own personality, and exhibits people widely different

from himself acting and talking as they ought to do. This he achieves by sympathy and intuition. Yet all except the very greatest fail to render adequately what they have not felt and been. In playwrights of the second order, like our Fletcher, or of the third order, like our Byron, the individual who writes the tragedy and shapes the characters is always apparent under every mask he chooses to assume. And even the style of the greatest, their manner of presenting the varieties of human nature, betrays individual peculiarities. Æschylus sees men and women differently from Sophocles, Corneille from Racine, Shakespeare from Goethe.

In like manner the broad distinctions of mental temperament may be traced in style. The abstract thinker differs from the concrete thinker in his choice of terms; the analytical from the synthetic; the ratiocinative from the intuitive; the logical from the imaginative; the scientific from the poetical. One man thinks in images, another in formal propositions. One is diffuse, and gets his thought out by reiterated statement. Another makes epigrams, and finds some difficulty in expanding their sense or throwing light upon them by illustrations. One arrives at conclusions by the way of argument. Another clothes assertion with the tropes and metaphors of rhetoric.

The same is true of physical and æsthetical

qualities. They are felt inevitably in style. The sedentary student does not use the same figures of speech as come naturally to the muscular and active lover of field sports. According as the sense for colour, or for sound, or for light, or for form shall preponderate in a writer's constitution, his language will abound in references to the world, viewed under conditions of colour, sound, light, or form. He will insensibly dwell upon those aspects of things which stimulate his sensibility and haunt his memory. Thus, too, predilections for sea or mountains, for city-life or rural occupations, for flowers, precious stones, scents, birds, animals, insects, different kinds of food, torrid or temperate climates, leave their mark on literary style.

Acquired faculties and habits find their expression in style no less than inborn qualities. Education, based upon humanism or scientific studies; contact with powerful personalities at an impressible period of youth; enthusiasm aroused for this or that great masterpiece of literature; social environment; high or low birth; professional training for the bar, the church, medicine, or commerce; life in the army, at sea, upon a farm, and so forth, tinge the mind and give a more or less perceptible colour to language.

The use of words itself yields, upon analysis, valuable results illustrative of the various temperaments of authors. A man's vocabulary marks him

out as of this sort or that sort—his preference for certain syntactical forms, for short sentences or for periods, for direct or inverted propositions, for plain or figurative statement, for brief or amplified illustrations. Some compose sentences, but do not build paragraphs—like Emerson; some write chapters, but cannot construct a book. Nor is punctuation to be disregarded, inasmuch as stops enable us to measure a writer's sense of time-values, and the importance he attaches to several degrees of rest and pause.

III.

It is impossible to do more than indicate some of the leading points which illustrate the meaning of the saying that style is the man; any one can test them and apply them for himself. We not only feel that Walter Scott *did not* write like Thackeray, but we also know that he *could not* write like Thackeray, and *vice versâ*. This impossibility of one man producing work in exactly the same manner as another makes all deliberate attempts at imitation assume the form of parody or caricature. The sacrifice of individuality involved in scrupulous addiction to one great master of Latin prose, Cicero, condemned the best stylists of the Renaissance—men like Muretus—to lifeless and eventually worthless production. Meanwhile the exact psychology is wanting which would render

our intuitions regarding the indissoluble link between style and personal character irrefutable.*

Literary style is more a matter of sentiment, emotion, involuntary habits of feeling and observing, constitutional sympathy with the world and men, tendencies of curiosity and liking, than of the pure intellect. The style of scientific works, affording little scope for the exercise of these psychological elements, throws less light upon their authors' temperament than does the style of poems, novels, essays, books of travel, descriptive criticism. In the former case all that need be aimed at is lucid exposition of fact and vigorous reasoning. In the latter, the fact to be stated, the truth to be arrived at, being of a more complex nature, involves a process akin to that of the figurative arts. The stylist has here to produce the desired effect by suggestions of infinite subtlety, and to present impressions made upon his sensibility.

Autobiographies, epistolary correspondence, notes of table-talk, are of the highest value in determining the correlation between a writer's self and his style. We not only derive a mass of information about Goethe's life from Eckermann, but we also

* While I was engaged in writing this essay, a young French author, now, alas! dead, sent me a book which may be considered as an important contribution to the psychology of style. It is entitled, "La Critique Scientifique," par Émile Hennequin. Paris: Perrin et Cie., 1888.

discover from those conversations in how true a sense the style of Goethe's works grew out of his temperament and experience. Gibbon and Rousseau, Alfieri and Goldoni, Samuel Johnson in his "Life" by Boswell, John Stuart Mill in his autobiographical essay, Petrarch in his "Secretum" and fragment of personal confessions, have placed similar keys within our reach for unlocking the secret of their several manners.

The rare cases in which men of genius have excelled in more than one branch of art are no less instructive. Michel Angelo the sonnet-writer helps us to understand Michel Angelo the sculptor. Rossetti the painter throws light on Rossetti the poet; William Blake the lyrist upon William Blake the draughtsman. We find, on comparing the double series of work offered by such eminent and exceptionally gifted individuals, that their styles in literature and plastic art possess common qualities, which mark the men and issue from their personalities. Michel Angelo in the sonnets is as abstract, as ideal, as form-loving, as indifferent to the charm of brilliant colour, as neglectful of external nature as Michel Angelo in his statues and the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. Rossetti's pictures, with their wealth of colour, their elaborate execution, their sharp incisive vision, their deep imaginative mysticism and powerful perfume of intellectual sensuousness, present a close analogue

to his ballads, sonnets, and descriptive poems. With these and similar instances in our mind, we are prepared to hear that Victor Hugo designed pictures in the style of Gustave Doré; nor would it surprise us to discover that Gustave Doré had left odes or fiction in the manner of Victor Hugo.

The problems suggested by style as a sign and index of personality may be approached from many points of view. I have not aimed at exhaustiveness even of suggestion in my treatment of the topic; and while saying much which will appear perhaps trivial and obvious, have omitted some of the subtler and more interesting aspects of the matter. A systematic criticism of personal style would require a volume, and would demand physiological and psychological knowledge which is rarely found in combination with an extensive study of literatures and arts.

Part IV.

THE ART OF STYLE.

I.

"THE choice and command of language," said Gibbon, "is the fruit of exercise." Every writer has it in his power to improve his faculty of expression, as every athlete can improve his muscular development by practice.

The final end of all style is precision, veracity of utterance, truth to the thing to be presented. The thing itself will differ in simplicity and complexity, in scientific aridity and in emotional richness, in imaginative grandeur and in passionate intensity. Style, regarded from the point of view of art, adapts itself to these differences in the subject-matter. Whether consciously or unconsciously, is not at present the question. It suffices to say that style (if worthy of the name) finds the pure phrase, the fitting mode of utterance. It rejects superfluities, admits ornament where ornament is part and parcel of the thing to be presented, seeks beauty in truth, selects, discards, mindful always that there is one and only one absolutely right way of saying anything.

This is as true of poetry as of prose. Phrases like:

> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
> And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong:

or like:

> Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is;
> What if my leaves are falling like its own!

have to be regarded as simple propositions, no less simple than these which follow:

> So ended this great siege, the most memorable in the annals of the British Isles. It had lasted a hundred and five days. The garrison had been reduced from about seven thousand effective men to about three thousand.

All these propositions are right, are veracious, are good in style, in so far as they are adequate to the speaker's thought and perception of fact—in the first two cases to the highly charged and complex matter which Wordsworth and Shelley sought to deliver, in the third to the definite issue which Macaulay had to report. Criticism might question whether the siege of Londonderry was really "the most memorable in the annals of the British Isles." But criticism, knowing Macaulay's view of English history, would have no right to challenge his statement on the ground of style. Criticism might object to Wordsworth's identification of Duty with Cosmic Law, and to Shelley's pathetic

sympathy with autumn woodlands. But criticism, having seized each poet's point of view, would have no right to challenge his statement on the ground of style. In each case the verbal expression is correspondent to the thing presented.

Precision being the main purpose of a writer, he will pay minute attention to the grammar and logic of language, so that there may be no obscurity or incoherence in his method of expression. With the same object he will study the qualities of words, remembering that the right word used in the right place constitutes the perfection of style. Words will be weighed in their sonority, their colour-value, their suggestiveness, their derivation and metaphysical usage. He will show his taste by the avoidance of foreign vocables, neologisms, obsolete terms, unless the rhetoric of his subject-matter renders such *verba insolentia* helpful to the meaning. To be meticulous (as Sir Thomas Browne would say) in the adoption of new phrases or the resuscitation of old words is hardly less reprehensible than to be reckless in the ill-considered use of them. Justice of perception consists in knowing how and when and where to deviate from the beaten track; and in nothing do writers of equal excellence reveal their individual proclivities more plainly than in their selection of uncommon vocables or turns of phrase.

The art of style, like all arts of expression, does

not aim exclusively at precision. It is a fine art, and demands beauty as the concomitant of truth. We have a sense for the beauty of language in itself, just as we have a sense for the beauty of sounds, colours, forms. This sense claims to be gratified by harmonious and rhythmic utterance. Students of style will therefore take pains to avoid unnecessary tautology, to vary the openings and outlines of propositions, to alternate long and short sentences, and to connect these into well-built paragraphs. They will be sensible that, as every idea has its one right verbal form, so every phrase ought to have its own distinctive cadence. Goethe used to say that each poetic motive brought with it a rhythm and a stanza proper to itself; and this remark might be extended to the minutest particles of thought conveyed in language.

Only slovenly writers who never felt the beauty of verbal form, and brutal writers who do wilful violence to language, ignore the duty of seeking the right phrase. Those for whom style is an art will differ immeasurably in their power to use it. The unknown painter struggling with a task beyond his faculty cannot charm our senses with the suave and luminous achievements of a Titian or Veronese. But even humble workers are able to do much by love and care, toward lifting their utterance above the dead level of commonplace. Let them rewrite sentences, recast paragraphs, remould chapters,

seeking at every step a bettering of their best, a closer union with the melody which penetrates the intellectual ear. Striving thus, we become sensible of what is meant by art in style. We grow more vigorous; and when there comes some vital thought to utter, the clothing words spring forth with more of freshness, strength, and music.

The lucid exposition of ideas in ordered sequence, the weaving of sentences into coherent paragraphs, the unfolding of arguments by natural yet logically constructed steps, the presentation of scenes and pictures by successions of contributory images—these operations of the literary craftsman demand close attention to what is called transition. Style, it has been said, consists in the art of transition: that is the art of moving easily and convincingly from point to point, supplying the needful "connective tissue" of language without clumsiness and without the obtrusive pedantry of scholastic distinctions. Nor let it be imagined that this is a mere matter of stylistic grace. The art of transition and connection has quite as much to do with veracity of thought as with elegance of expression. It was upon this art, as the one thing needful to sound rhetoric, that Socrates discoursed in his golden way to Phædrus on the banks of the Ilissus. This is what Buffon meant by the words which so impressed Gustave Flaubert: "Toutes les beautés intellectuelles qui se trouvent dans un

beau style, tous les rapports dont il est composé, sont autant de vérités aussi utiles, et peut-être plus précieuses pour l'esprit public, que celles qui peuvent faire le fond du sujet."

II.

While bestowing minute attention on the niceties of language, young writers should bear in mind that no rules of composition, no rhetoric which professes to teach the art of treating subjects appropriately, can supply the two requisites of a good style—vigorous and well-digested thought, which constitutes its matter; and pure idiomatic diction, which constitutes its crowning grace of form.

"Authors," said De Quincey, in his unfinished essay on Style, "have always been a dangerous class for any language." They have been dangerous because they are liable to substitute sophistry and declamation for solid thinking, and because the habit of writing books alienates their language from the vivacity of the vernacular and the raciness of spoken idiom.

Few men of letters nowadays would dare to follow Swift and Sterne, those classics of our prose, in their bold use of colloquialisms. Goethe prided himself on "having never thought much about thinking." We might argue in favour of not thinking overmuch about writing. A fastidious

avoidance of what is plain and common may lead us insensibly into the worst of all faults—affectation and stylistic pedantry; may blind us to the fact that what we say is more important than how we say it, and that the first condition of good writing is strong feeling and clear thinking.

Englishmen, however, incline toward carelessness rather than scrupulousness in the matter of language. It will be long before our journalists and novelists deserve the reproach which George Sand is said to have addressed to Flaubert, and which, in my opinion, Flaubert, that martyr to verbal nicety, deserved: "You regard expression as an end in itself; it is but an effect."

The purity of idiom in English literature runs its chief risks from bookish phrases, from misapplied terms like "predicament" and "category," from nouns in "ist" and "ism" ("scientist," "educationalist," "evolutionism"), from evil metaphors involved in verbs like "to avail oneself of," from hackneyed forms of artificial sentences, which save the writer trouble and blind him to the duty of saying freshly what he thinks and feels. From the great curse of German, the wholesale incorporation of foreign words into the language, we are fortunately delivered by the genius of our mother speech. We cannot construct endless ugly verbs in *iren*, or adopt French vocables with mutilated terminations. Nor again is it within the power

of English writers to construct flaccid sentences of between two hundred and three hundred words, in which the attention of the reader is suspended till the close falls on the separable particle of the leading verb. That is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, which can be found only in German.

De Quincey, in the essay already quoted from, inveighs against "the tumid and tumultuary structure of our sentences." He delivers his impeachment in the following period, which, except that it is artfully conducted to a climax, might seem designed to illustrate the fault he is attacking:

Ever since a more bookish air was impressed upon composition without much effort by the Latinised and artificial phraseology, by forms of expression consecrated to books, and by long-tailed words in *osity* and *ation*, either because writers felt that already, in this one act of preference shown to the artificial vocabulary, they had done enough to establish a differential character of regular composition, and on that consideration thought themselves entitled to neglect the combination of their words into sentences or periods; or because there is a real natural sympathy between the Latin phraseology and a Latin structure of sentence; certain it is and remarkable, that our popular style in the common limited sense of arrangement applied to words or the syntax of sentences, has laboured with two faults that might have been thought incompatible; it has been artificial, by artifices peculiarly adapted to the powers of the Latin language, and yet at the very same time careless and disordinate.

Every artist in style ought to be able to construct a period like this. But he should be

cautious in the exercise of his power, reserving it for solemn and exceptional occasions. De Quincey wrote before the days of Macaulay, the *Saturday Review*, and Mr. Matthew Arnold. Whatever may be urged against our average prose style now, it can no longer be called "tumid and tumultuary." From neither a good nor a bad author of the present time would it be easy to extract a sentence with as many inversions, parentheses, suspensions, as many resounding Latin words, and an apodosis so long suspended, as mark the example I have just quoted. Short propositions and easy writing have become fashionable. Simplicity of structure is even ostentatiously paraded.

III.

Among means toward the acquisition of pure style, the most important is "industrious and select reading."

When Ben Jonson, in the *Poetaster*, administered his purge to Marston, he bade that crabbed writer break his fast upon "old Cato's principles," then "taste a piece of Terence, suck his phrase instead of liquorice." Plautus and Ennius among the Romans were to be shunned as meat too crude for queasy stomachs. So was Lycophron among the Greeks. But Callimachus, Theocritus, and "high Homer" might be read with profit. In the sixteenth century these were needful precepts.

There were then few models of written style except the ancients and some masterpieces of Italian. But even in that limited field criticism exercised its judgment, pointing out which authors were to be preferred because of their lucidity.

The case is altered now. We have a rich and varied modern literature to choose from. The first duty of a student should be to make himself acquainted with the classics of his own nation. This forms a copious vocabulary, and fills the ear with native rhythms both in prose and verse. Each language, however, has its specific strength and beauty. Therefore it is desirable to study Greek and Latin for clear-cut form in style, Italian for melodious flow, French for limpidity and finish. By observing what is excellent in each of these literatures, and in what points they differ from our own, by translating passages from their great writers into English, and considering how the genius of our tongue may assimilate their graces, the novice gradually forms a style.

Although a man's style is the sign of his faculties, yet he possesses the power of moulding it upon that of the writers he prefers—as George Sand moulded hers on Rousseau, Mr. Ruskin his on the Bible and Hooker, Mr. R. L. Stevenson his on the multitude of authors whom it was his habit, while a youth, assiduously to imitate. Nothing is more disastrous than to take as model some illus-

trious artist whose tricks are more easily assimilated than his excellences. Lyly, through the vogue of Euphuism, injured English prose in the seventeenth century, and Marino ruined the poetry of the Italians. Johnson was noxious at the end of the last century. Carlyle debased the standard of narrative and critical diction in the second half of the nineteenth century. Macaulay, in spite of his sterling merit, is accountable for much that is flashy and short-winded in contemporary style.

The control exercised by famous authors over the forms of national literature through successive centuries is one of the most curious aspects of the present inquiry. We have only to think of the influence of Cicero and Virgil over Latin prose and poetry; of Boccaccio and Petrarch over Italian. Men are in all ways more imitative than we usually allow. This might be further illustrated by the predominance of fashion at certain epochs. It became the custom among us in England, about the middle of the seventeenth century, to write with eyes fixed steadily on France as the exponent of the classical tradition. During the last hundred years we have been writing in conscious and admiring sympathy with our Elizabethan ancestors. After allowance has been made for divergence from the models fashionable at each of these epochs—divergences due in the one case to national genius, and in the other to historical and social changes

within the English people—the specific notes of the two periods in our literature may be roughly explained by reference respectively to dominance of French and Elizabethan fashion.*

IV.

Style, as we have seen, is a twofold phenomenon, involving both the genius of nations exemplified in language, and the genius of individuals who use the language. Thus considered, the art of style consists, for each person, in the method of employing his faculties of thought and feeling, and his command of any given language, to the best advantage.

But style also varies with the nature of the subject-matter, the state of the writer's mind at any given moment, and the end to be attained by utterance. The style of poetry differs essentially from that of prose; and neglect of this fact leads to hybrid composition, which offends the purest taste. Poetical prose and word-painting are common with those writers who have not made up their minds in what direction their powers lie—who would fain be poets, and yet choose the seemingly more facile vehicle of prose to utter their emotions.

"That is good rhetoric for the hustings which

* I hope to pursue this subject further in an essay on "Elizabethan and Victorian Poetry."

is bad for a book," said De Quincey. "In the senate, and for the same reason in a newspaper, it is good to reiterate your meaning." The orator has to repeat his arguments, and to place the same points in new lights, lest their force should escape the fugitive attention of an audience. It would be impertinent in the writer of a book to claim the privileges of a public speaker. His readers are able to perpend his sentences, to pause and ponder, to resume the chain of reasoning by casting their eyes backward over the pages they have traversed. Yet, even in books, some subjects demand a more oratorical method of treatment than others. When it is the writer's aim to persuade his readers, to carry them gently along with him, to infiltrate their minds with unfamiliar or difficult ideas, he may indulge in repetition. This made the style of J. S. Mill effective. But it also rendered that style deceptive by its very lucidity, hiding the thinness of some thoughts which were presented under aspects so agreeably varied.

That is good rhetoric for the pulpit which is bad for the bar; and conversely a forensic style is intolerable within the precincts of a church. Lord Brougham was right to study Demosthenes; but Bossuet, and South, and Newman are proper models for a canon of S. Paul's. The reason is apparent. On the hustings, in the senate, before juries, in the pulpit, men appeal to different passions and

emotions: they are not only dealing with different orders of ideas, but are attempting to impress different sensibilities, and to influence the reason by different kinds of argument. The mood of the speaker differs in each case; he feels a different stimulus and draws his inspiration from different sources. The same man is frequently a first-rate preacher and a powerful platform orator; he may also be an excellent parliamentary speaker. But the change of attitude implied in each of these positions necessitates an alteration in his style. The personality of Mr. Gladstone, the character of the individual moulding his manner of expression, appears alike in that great rhetorician's books, letters, lay-sermons, speeches to the House, and addresses to Midlothian monster meetings. They display common qualities of eloquence and casuistical subtlety, combined with imperfect powers of criticism; but these are variously, if slightly, modified according to the matter and the mode of presentation.

Within the stricter limits of writing the same rhetorical principles hold good. If a man of science sits down to pen a treatise which will be read by experts in the libraries, and discussed in the learned societies of Europe, he confines himself to exact statement and the lucid order of marshalled arguments. If he desires to popularise the same ideas, he abounds in illustrations and elucidations, intro-

ducing matter which would have been irrelevant in the handling of his theme for scientific students.

History, fiction, biography, albeit they are three species of prose narrative, demand different styles. It is indeed possible to lend the glamour of romance to history, as Michelet did in his "Histoire de France," or to treat it from the biographical point of view, as Carlyle did in his "Frederick." Yet history cannot be mistaken for deliberate fiction or for pure biography. Fiction, in like manner, may be composed upon the lines of history or biography; but in so far as it assumes the gravity of the one or the veracity of the other, it fails to communicate the impressions we expect from romance. This is proved sufficiently by current language. We say that the sixth and seventh books of Thucydides are as engrossing as any novel, that the last three books of Herodotus have the movement of a drama, that the incidents of Cellini's autobiography surpass the boldest inventions of an imaginative writer. That means that we look for certain qualities in fiction, of which we are now and then reminded in the lives of men or the episodes of national story. Biography, again, can be written from the point of view of fiction—that was common enough in past ages; or from the point of view of history—that is a favourite practice nowadays. But whether we regard Plutarch's "Lives" and Machiavelli's "Castruccio Castracane," which represent the one

method, or the many "Lives and Times" of eminent persons which are fashionable at the present date, it is obvious in each case that the writers were aiming at what should pass for full-length portraits of individuals. Biography differs from fiction, since it appeals to the sense of veracity, and does not seek to create illusion; from history, since it discards details which will not throw the central figure into high relief.

Within the sphere of dramatic poetry, it is clear that tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, owing to their different tone and subject-matter, require different arts of rhetoric. You cannot write an idyll in the same manner as a satire, or pronounce the panegyric of a deceased emperor in the style appropriate to a discourse on bees. The choice of vehicle in each of these cases may be the same. Prose may be used for every species of the drama. Idylls, satires, panegyrics, didactic poems, may be composed in the same metre—hexameters, or heroic couplets, or blank verse. Yet the matter to be handled and the mental attitude of the writer while handling it, necessitate unmistakable differences of literary mood and form.

These are truisms with which every student is familiar. The excuse for repeating them is twofold. In the first place we have to insist upon the indissoluble nexus between thought and language, whereby a change in the writer's mental attitude,

a change in his mental material, induces a corresponding quality of differentiated style. In the second place they enable us to point out a further sense in which style may be regarded as an art to be acquired by practice—through the study of acknowledged masterpieces in each of the branches of literature.

A man's own style will to a large extent be made or marred by the masters under whose influence he falls, or by the impress of a prevalent ideal. If this were not so, we should be unable to trace the tradition of Virgilian style in Latin literature, or to define the predominance of Boccaccio in the literature of the Italian Renaissance. We could not discuss the characteristics of a given epoch or the manner of a well-marked school: by which terms we are wont to indicate the co-operative action of gregarious writers and their liability to imitation. A deeper meaning might be given to these aspects of transmitted style. But this is not the place to entertain speculative questions which have been already discussed in a former essay.*

For the present, it is enough to point out that a writer, having developed his command of language, improved his taste by reading, and discovered the compass of his organ of expression, seeks further

* See above, Essay No. 2, on the Application of Evolutionary Principles to Art and Literature.

instruction when he wishes to apply his power of style to any special form of prose or poetry. If he is ambitious to compose an epic, he will inquire how Homer, Virgil, Dante, Tasso, Milton, set about their task; or the taste of his age may direct him to the Scandinavian Sagas, the Nibelungen, the Song of Roland, and the "Morte d'Arthur." If he is an orator, he will consult Demosthenes, Cicero, Burke, Bossuet. If his bent be toward tragedy, he will meditate the Attic and Elizabethan dramatists, the French classics, Goethe and Schiller. If he attempts satire, he will see what Archilochus and Aristophanes, Juvenal and Persius, Rabelais and Regnier, Cervantes and Swift, Dryden and Pope, Heine and Victor Hugo, have done before him. If history attract his genius, Herodotus and Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus, Machiavelli and Michelet, Gibbon and Macaulay, Von Ranke and Mommsen, claim his attention. And so forth through the whole long list of literary species.

We cannot, in the present conditions of culture, affirm that any monuments of art are absolutely authoritative. The choice is large. The canons of criticism are liberal. The instincts of the individual, whether at variance with the general tendency of his age, or submissive to its influence, will determine his selection of a model. Still, it is certain that some model, whether deliberately chosen or passively assimilated, exercises a control

over the writer's manner. If the art of style could be reduced to a fixed science, then certain masterpieces in each branch of literature would have to be recognised as indisputable standards, and production would cease or merge in imitation. But the intellectual bias of the century forbids such a relapse into the pedantry of classicism. Taste, therefore, and the rules of comparative study under which we work now, force the artist to reflect upon the various creations of numerous predecessors in any field which he has undertaken. And thus the great monuments of past ages are continually moulding and impressing the style of the present, crossing and recrossing, blending their influences. Ever more and more, the literature of the Occidental races tends to become a complicated mass of hybrids.

DEMOCRATIC ART.

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WALT WHITMAN.

I. 11322.

DURING the first half of this century, the rival merits of classical and romantic art were stormily debated. There is no need to revive that discussion. People of sense now recognise the truth that in whatever style an artist works, the style will be classical, provided the work itself be good, sincere, and representative of sterling thought. Yet a few words have to be said about this bygone phase of European criticism, since it forms a necessary prelude to the treatment of Democratic Art.

The romantic revolt against those canons of taste which prevailed in Europe after the Revival of Learning, was in some respects analogous to the insurgence of realism against idealism. It took its origin in a desire for free and spontaneous artistic form. It started from the conviction that there was something radically insincere in the orthodox rules regarding dignity of sentiment,

sustained diction, and heroic action. The study of mediæval antiquities, the revived enthusiasm for Shakespeare, and the powerful impact of the German mind aroused from its long lethargy, provoked a reaction against humanistic traditions, which acquired revolutionary force in France. Romantic poets, novelists, and painters declared their abhorrence of the conventional "grand style." They sought inspiration from hitherto neglected masterpieces of the Middle Ages. They delighted in the crudest aspects of human life and nature. To be striking, vivid, passionate, and grotesque was their main object. Proportion and harmony gave place to wayward incoherence. The gutter, the hospital, the galleys were ransacked for examples of pathos and nobility. Witches and vampires superseded the Pantheon of Olympus. Murder, rape, suicide, disgust of life in love-lorn youths and maidens, formed the motive principles of wild unhealthy fiction. It was a time of spasms and contortions, of *Sturm und Drang* and *Weltschmerz;* of Goethe's *Werther*, De Musset's *Rolla*, Byron's *Manfred*, Heine's *Ratcliffe*, Schiller's *Robbers*. Sense and stateliness, the precepts of Boileau, Voltaire's pellucid irony, Pope's correction, Lessing's moderation, were assailed with ridicule and sarcasm. The great but essentially imperfect work of men like Victor Hugo, Delacroix, Gautier, testified to the vitality of this reactionary

movement. It found a prose Shakespeare in Balzac, and produced a monumental masterpiece in Goethe's *Faust*.

Meanwhile a thorough-going emancipation of taste and judgment had been effected. The freedom for which the earlier romanticists had fought was gained. New forms of expression and new standards of artistic excellence prevailed. Pseudo-classical insincerity and hollowness were purged away; and it became apparent that romanticism, in its turn, was not devoid of pedantry. The main result of this romantic revolution was the discovery that no subject in human history or life, no object in the eternal world of nature, is unpoetical or unfitted for artistic treatment. At the same time, all methods of handling, all ways of seizing and presenting the material of art, obtained an equal right to exist. At the end of the conflict, criticism only demanded that style should realise the end proposed by the artist, that workmanship should be honest, the craftsman conscientious, and the product faithful to the concept.

This in itself was a great gain. Yet if this had been all, the prospect for the future would not have been cheering. As their names imply, both classicism and romanticism were derivative and not spontaneous ways of conceiving the art problem. The classical schools of modern times rehandled material and observed rules supplied from Greece

and Rome through scholarship. The romantic schools reverted to the literature and the architecture of feudalism. Classicism was essentially aristocratic. Romanticism was revolutionary; but it drew its inspiration from sources no less aristocratic. Neither mode possessed finality, because neither corresponded to the cardinal phenomenon of the nineteenth century, which is the advent of the people. The point to which we have been brought by their conflict in the sphere of art and letters is that a new mode of utterance, which may be termed the Democratic, has been rendered possible. The shams of the classicists, the spasms of the romanticists, have alike to be abandoned. Neither on a mock Parnassus nor on a pasteboard Blocksberg can the poets of the age now worship. The artist walks the world at large beneath the light of natural day. Despising nothing which the past can teach, rejecting nothing which the present offers, he aims at manifesting what he finds of beautiful and striking in the outer and the inner worlds: secure the while that if he feels sincerely and labours conscientiously, his work will be of sterling value, no matter what the style may be or what kind of subject has attracted him.

II.

This, speaking broadly, is the initial condition of Democratic Art: an art free in its choice of style,

free in its choice of subject; an art which has recovered sobriety after the delirium of romantic revolution; but which retains from that reactionary movement one precious principle—that nothing in nature or in man is unpoetical, if treated by a mind which feels its poetry and can interpret it.

This, however, is only the beginning, the attitude, the opportunity of Democratic Art. There remains a graver question to be considered. How shall the poet and the artist adjust themselves to what I have called the cardinal fact of our epoch, to the advent of the people? Classical and feudal art were essentially aristocratic. Modern classicism and romanticism were in a derivative sense aristocratic also. The latter, it is true, brought certain aspects of the people into prominence. But it did so hysterically, in a spirit of revolt, without clear intelligence of the altered political and social conditions to which serious art must henceforth respond.

Under these conditions an art for the people, of the people, seems imperatively demanded, unless art, including literature, shall relax its hold upon reality and subside into agreeable trifling.

Up to the present moment there are but few signs of any vital resurrection of the spirit. Not only in Europe, but in America also, culture continues to be mainly reproductive and imitative. The conflict of romanticism with classicism

liberated taste; yet artists still handle worn-out themes in the old formal ways, without the earlier grasp upon them, without fervour of conviction, and without power to awake popular enthusiasm.

III.

So far as I am aware, only one living author has approached this problem with a full sense of its present urgency and ultimate preponderance. I allude to Walt Whitman, whose whole life has been employed in attempting to lay foundations for a new national literature. Whatever we may think about Whitman's actual performance, it is impossible to neglect his teaching or his practice, when we entertain the question of Democratic Art. For this reason I propose to examine what he has written directly and indirectly upon the topic.

A short but pregnant essay, entitled "Democratic Vistas," contains the pith of Whitman's theoretical opinions. It starts with a declaration of the author's intention to use "the words America and Democracy" as "convertible terms." "The United States," he says, "are destined to surmount the gorgeous history of Feudalism, or else prove the most tremendous failure of time." Whitman points out that while America advances rapidly to a dominant position in wealth and strength and all material qualities of national greatness, a literature corresponding to that

modern Democracy with which she is identified, has not as yet appeared. "Feudalism, caste, the ecclesiastic traditions, though palpably retreating from political institutions, still hold essentially by their spirit, even in this country, entire possession of the most important fields, indeed the very subsoil of education and of social standards and literature." From this proposition he advances to the assertion that "Democracy can never prove itself beyond cavil until it founds and luxuriantly grows its own forms of arts, poems, schools, theology, displacing all that exists or that has been produced anywhere in the past, under opposite influences."

The claims here advanced for the art demanded by America and Democracy are perhaps excessive. Yet Walt Whitman has to be attended to when he writes upon this subject. "He *is* Democracy," said Thoreau, speaking of him. And his opinions, although audacious in the extreme, are those of a powerful thinker as well as a sagacious observer.

In the Old World we shall possibly find them only in part valuable; since they are specially uttered for the instruction of the United States. England, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, cannot be expected to break with their historical traditions, and to discard all "that has been produced anywhere in the past, under opposite conditions." Whatever may be the triumph of Democracy in

Europe, this is requiring too much of nations born in the purple, and adorned with so many illustrious monuments of ancestral genius. It may also be doubted whether Whitman is wise in exhorting the miscellaneous population of North America to found a new culture which shall "displace all that exists."

The mental progress of humanity is not effected by abrupt divisions and sudden dislocations. Every process of change implies absorption, blending, compromise, recombination. As in the case of a glacier, if movement implies fracture, it also involves regelation. The spirit of an age or race yields to that of its successor, but abides within it still as an essential ingredient—assumed, transformed, and carried forward. Modern forces evolve themselves inside the sphere of men and manners, which have been shaped by influences derived from remote antiquity. We are the complex outcome of a tenfold mingled ancestry, not any portion of which has been, or can be, absolutely cast aside. To escape the fatality of hereditary transmission is hopeless. No individual man can be wholly original, in the sense of being independent of his progenitors and predecessors. Far more impossible is it for whole nations to fling themselves adrift from their moorings, or to construct an ideal world of culture corresponding to temporary conditions however urgent and imposing. The advent of the people,

paramount as it is in the experience of the nineteenth century, will not revolutionise the laws which govern human society. Language, the instrument of thought and the vehicle of utterance, remains an uncontrollable witness to the dependence of the present on the past. No one has been so insane as to pretend that odes and epics could be written in Volapük.*

After making these deductions, Whitman's claim for a new start in culture deserves serious consideration. Democracy is a fact, the main fact, I repeat it, of our epoch. It is more than a political phenomenon. It contains the germ of a religious

* Whitman himself seems willing to concede the point on which I have insisted in this paragraph. He says, in an article on the "Poetry of the Future" (*North American Review*, February, 1881 — why not included in his "November Boughs," I know not): "I see that this world of the West, as part of all, fuses inseparably with the East, and with all, as time does—the ever new, yet old, old human race—'the same subject continued,' as the novels of our grandfathers had it for chapter-heads. If we are not to hospitably receive and complete the inaugurations of the old civilisations, and change their small scale to the largest, broadest scale, what on earth are we for?" That is common sense. Here Whitman puts his position with regard to the innovatory and superseding destiny of the United States in a reasonable light. Wishing to do him justice, I have quoted the passage; although I am not aware that he has republished the article in which it occurs. It may appear in one of the many collections of his works in prose and verse with which I am unacquainted. At any rate, the essay ought to be read by students of Whitman, for it is full of fine things.

enthusiasm. If the modern world is destined to be remodelled by Democracy—and in some form or other this must happen—then what is applicable to America will in a large measure apply to Europe also. We need not accept the postulate that Democracy must prove itself beyond cavil by creating intellectual types which shall displace all that previously existed. But we may believe that Democracy will and ought to produce arts and a literature differing in essential points from those of classical antiquity and romantic feudalism. We may admit that Græco-Roman and mediæval ideals are inadequate to the modern, democratic, scientific stage upon which humanity has definitely entered. We may even be so sanguine as to hope that this new phase of development contains an ideality of its own, capable of contributing hitherto unapprehended sources of inspiration to the artist.

This is the problem offered to investigation in my present essay. I wish to consider it mainly from the point of view furnished by Whitman's writings.

IV.

There are two aspects under which the problem of Democratic Art must be regarded. In the first place we have to ask what sort of art, including literature under this title, Democracy requires. To this question Whitman, in his "Democratic Vistas," gives an answer: turbid in expression, far from

lucid, but pregnant with sympathetic intelligence of the main issues. In the second place we have to ask what elements are furnished to the artist by the people, which have not already been worked out in the classical and feudal forms and their derivatives. Whitman attempts to supply us with an answer to this second question also, not in his speculative essays, but in the mass of imaginative compositions which he designates by the name of poems or notes for poems. His report upon both topics may be postponed for the moment, while we revert to the revolution effected by the romantic movement of a hundred years ago. It behoves us to review the clearance of obsolete obstructions, and to survey the new ground gained, whereon our hopes are founded of a future reconstruction.

Delivered from scholastic traditions regarding style and the right subjects to be handled—delivered from pedantry and blind reactionary fervour—delivered from dependence upon aristocratic and ecclesiastical authority—sharing the emancipation of the intellect by modern science and the enfranchisement of the individual by new political conceptions—the artist is brought immediately face to face with the wonderful world of men and things he has to interpret and to recreate. The whole of nature, seen for the first time with sane eyes, the whole of humanity, liberated for the

first time from caste and class distinctions, invite his sympathy. Now dawns upon his mind the beauty, the divinity, which lies enfolded in the simplest folk, the commonest objects presented to his senses. He perceives the dignity of humble occupations, the grace inherent in each kind of labour well performed. He discovers that love is a deity in the cottage no less than in kings' chambers; not with the supercilious condescension of Tasso's "Aminta" or Guarini's "Pastor Fido," but with a reverent recognition of the *præsens deus* in the heart of every man and woman. In order to make Florizel and Perdita charming, it is no longer necessary that they should be prince and princess in disguise; nor need the tale of "Daphnis and Chloe" now be written with that lame conclusion of lost children restored to wealthy high-born parents. Heroism steps forth from the tent of Achilles; chivalry descends from the arm-gaunt charger of the knight; loyalty is seen to be no mere devotion to a dynasty; passionate friendship quits the brotherhood of Pylades and the dear embraces of Peirithous. None of these high virtues are lost to us. On the contrary, we find them everywhere. They are brought within reach, instead of being relegated to some remote region in the past, or deemed the special property of privileged classes. The engine-driver steering his train at night over perilous viaducts, the life-

boat man, the member of a fire-brigade assailing houses toppling to their ruin among flames; these are found to be no less heroic than Theseus grappling the Minotaur in Cretan labyrinths. And so it is with the chivalrous respect for womanhood and weakness, with loyal self-dedication to a principle or cause, with comradeship uniting men in brotherhood, with passion fit for tragedy, with beauty shedding light from heaven on human habitations. They were thought to dwell far off in antique fable or dim mediæval legend. They appeared to our fancy clad in glittering armour, plumed and spurred, surrounded with the aureole of noble birth. We now behold them at our house-doors, in the streets and fields around us. Conversely, our eyes are no longer shut to the sordidness and baseness which royal palaces and princely hearts may harbour —to the meanness of the Court of the Valois, to the vulgarity of the Court of Charles II., to the vile tone of a Prince Regent, to the dishonour, dishonesty, and disloyalty toward women which have always, more or less, prevailed in so-called good society.

This extended recognition of the noble and the lovely qualities in human life, the qualities upon which pure art must seize, is due partially to what we call democracy. But it implies something more than that word is commonly supposed to denote—a new and more deeply religious way of

looking at mankind, a gradual triumph after so many centuries of the spirit which is Christ's, an enlarged faculty for piercing below externals and appearances to the truth and essence of things. God, the divine, is recognised as immanent in nature, and in the soul and body of humanity; not external to these things, not conceived of as creative from outside, or as incarnated in any single personage, but as all-pervasive, all-constitutive, everywhere and in all. That is the democratic philosophy; and science has contributed in no small measure to produce it.

Meanwhile, we need not preach the abandonment of high time-honoured themes. Why should we seek to break the links which bind us to the best of that far past from which we came? Achilles has not ceased to be a fit subject for poem or statue, because we discern heroism in an engine-driver. Lovely knights and Flora Macdonald, Peirithous and Pylades, King Cophetua and Burd Helen, abide with all the lustre of their strength, and grace, and charm. They have lost nothing because others have gained—because we now acknowledge that the chivalry, the loyalty, the comradeship, the love, the pathos, which made their stories admirable, are shared by living men and women, whose names have not been sounded through fame's silver trumpet.

I have hitherto touched but lightly upon the

extension of the sphere of beauty which may be expected from Democratic Art. Through it we shall be led to discover the infinite varieties of lovely form which belong peculiarly to the people. Caste and high birth have no monopoly of physical comeliness. It may even be maintained that social conditions render it impossible for them to display more than a somewhat limited range of beauty. Goethe, I think, defined good society as that which furnished no material for poetry. We might apply this paradox to plastic art, and say that polished gentlemen and ladies do not furnish the best materials for sculpture and painting. How hardly shall they who wear evening clothes and ball-dresses enter into the kingdom of art! There is a characteristic beauty in each several kind of diurnal service, which waits to be elucidated. The superb poise of the mower, as he swings his scythe; the muscles of the blacksmith, bent for an unerring stroke upon the anvil; the bowed form of the reaper, with belt tightened round his loins; the thresher's arm uplifted, while he swings the flail; the elasticity of oarsmen rising from their strain against the wave; the jockey's grip across his saddle; the mountaineer's slow, swinging stride; the girl at the spinning-wheel, or carrying the water-bucket on her head, or hanging linen on the line, or busied with her china-closet: in each and every motive of this kind—and the list might be

indefinitely prolonged, for all trades and occupations have some distinguishing peculiarity—there appears a specific note of grace inalienable from the work performed. The artists of previous ages did not wholly neglect this truth. Indeed, they were eager to avail themselves of picturesque suggestions on the lines here indicated. Yet they used these motives mainly as adjuncts to themes of greater moment, and subordinated them to what was deemed some loftier subject. Consequently, these aspects of life did not receive the attention they deserve; and the stores of beauty inherent in human industries have been only partially developed. It is the business of Democratic Art to unfold them fully. The time has come when the noble and beautiful qualities of the people demand a prominent place among worthy artistic motives.

An arduous task lies before the arts, if they are to bring themselves into proper relation with the people; not, as is vulgarly supposed, because the people will debase their standard, but because it will be hard for them to express the real dignity, and to satisfy the keen perceptions and the pure taste of the people.

There is a danger lest the solution of this problem should suffer from being approached too consciously. What we want is simplicity, emotional directness, open-mindedness, intelligent sympathy,

keen and yet reverent curiosity, the scientific combined with the religious attitude toward fact. It will not do to be doctrinaire or didactic. Patronage and condescension are the worst of evils here. The spirit of Count Tolstoi, if that could descend in some new Pentecost, world prepare the world for Democratic Art.

Above all things, the middle-class conception of life must be transcended. Decency, comfort, sobriety, maintenance of appearances, gradual progression up a social ladder which is scaled by tenths of inches, the chapel or the church, the gig or the barouche, the growing balance at one's bankers, the addition of esquire to our name or of a red rosette to our button-hole, the firm resolve to keep well abreast with next-door neighbours, if not ahead of them, in business and respectability — all these things, which characterise the middle-class man wherever he appears, are good in their way. It were well that the people should incorporate these virtues. But there are corresponding defects in the *bourgeoisie* which have to be steadily rejected —an unwillingness to fraternise, an incapacity for comradeship, a habit of looking down on so-called inferiors, a contempt for hand-labour, a confusion of morality with prejudice and formula, a tendency to stifle religion in the gas of dogmas and dissenting shibboleths, an obstinate insensibility to ideas. Snobbery and Pharisaism, in one form or another,

taint the middle-class to its core. Self-righteousness, and personal egotism, and ostrich-fear corrode it. We need to deliver our souls from these besetting sins, and to rise above them into more ethereal atmosphere. The man of letters, the artist, who would fain prove himself adequate to Democracy in its noblest sense, must emerge from earthy vapours of complacent self, and artificial circumstances, and decaying feudalism. It is his privilege to be free, and to represent freedom. It is his function to find a voice, a mode of utterance, an ideal of form, which shall be on a par with nature delivered from unscientific canons of interpretation, and with mankind delivered from obsolescent class distinctions.

V.

Whitman offers enormous difficulties to the critic who wishes to deal fairly with him. The grotesqueness of his language and the uncouth structure of his sentences render it almost impossible to do justice to the breadth of his thought and the sublimity of his imagination. He ought to be taken in large draughts, to be lived with in long solitudes. His peculiar mode of utterance suffers cruelly by quotation. Yet it is needful to extract his very words, in order to escape from the vagueness of a summary.

The inscription placed upon the forefront of

"Leaves of Grass" contains this phrase: "I speak the word of the modern, the word EN-MASSE." What this word means for Whitman is expressed at large throughout his writings. We might throw light upon it from the following passage: *

I speak the pass-word primeval—I give the sign of democracy; By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms.

Thus Democracy implies the absolute equality of heritage possessed by every man and woman in the good and evil of this life. It also involves the conception that there is nothing beautiful or noble which may not be discovered in the simplest human being. As regards physical structure: †

Whoever you are! how superb and how divine is your body, or any part of it.

As regards emotion and passions which throb and pulsate in the individual: ‡

Wherever the human heart beats with terrible throes out of its ribs.

"Whoever" and "wherever" are the emphatic words in these quotations. The human body in itself is august; the heart has tragedy implicit in its life-beats. It does not signify *whose* body, or

* "Walt Whitman," 24. I quote from the New York edition of 1867, being unable to follow the changes in subsequent reissues of Whitman's works.

† Starting from "Paumanok," 14.

‡ "Walt Whitman," 33.

whose heart. Here, there, and everywhere, the seeing eye finds majesty, the sentient intelligence detects the stuff of drama.

The same principle is applied to the whole sphere of nature. Miracles need not be sought in special occurrences, in phenomena which startle us out of our ordinary way of regarding the universe: *

To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
Every inch of space is a miracle,
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,
Every cubic foot of the interior swarms with the same;
Every spear of grass—the frames, limbs, organs of men and women, and all that concern them,
All these to me are unspeakable miracles.

At this point science shakes hands with the democratic ideal. We are not forced to gaze upon the starry heavens, or to shudder at islands overwhelmed by volcanic throes, in order to spy out the marvellous. Wonders are always present in the material world, as in the spiritual: †

A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books.

The heroic lies within our reach, if we but stretch a finger forth to touch it: ‡

Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less to me than the Gods of the antique wars;
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,
Their brawny limbs passing safe over charred laths—their white foreheads whole and unhurt out of the flames.

* "Miracles." † "Walt Whitman," 154. ‡ Ibid., 41.

Whitman expels miracles from the region of mysticism, only to find a deeper mysticism in the world of which he forms a part, and miracles in commonplace occurrences. He dethrones the gods of old pantheons, because he sees God everywhere around him. He discrowns the heroes of myth and romance; but greets their like again among his living comrades. What is near to his side, beneath his feet, upon the trees around him, in the men and women he consorts with, bears comparison with things far off and rarities imagined:*

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars. . .

And the running blackberry would adorn the parlours of heaven. . .

And I could come every afternoon of my life to look at the farmer's girl boiling her iron tea-kettle and baking short-cake.

It is the faculty of the seer, of one who has understood the wonder of the world, whose eyes pierce below the surface, to recognise divinity in all that lives and breathes upon our planet:†

Painters have painted their swarming groups, and the centre figure of all;

From the head of the centre figure spreading a nimbus of gold-coloured light;

But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its nimbus of gold-coloured light;

From my hand, from the brain of every man and woman it streams, effulgently flowing for ever.

* "Walt Whitman," 31. † "Leaves of Grass," 4.

Pursuing this line of thought into the region of plastic art, we find the elements of dignity and beauty apparent in all forms of sane and healthy manhood : *

The expression of the face balks account ;
But the expression of a well-made man appears not only in his face,
It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the joints of his hips and wrists ;
It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his waist and knees—dress does not hide him ;
The strong, sweet, supple quality he has, strikes through the cotton and flannel.
To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem, perhaps more ;
You linger to see his back, and the back of his neck and shoulder-side.

Minor passages from Whitman's writings might be culled in plenty, which illustrate these general principles. He is peculiarly rich in subjects indicated for the sculptor or the painter, glowing with his own religious sense of beauty inherent in the simplest folk : †

The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,
The beauty of wood-boys and wood-men, with their clear, untrimmed faces.
.

* "I sing the Body Electric," 2.

† "Song of the Broad Axe," 3 ; "Walt Whitman," 33 ; ibid., 13.

Coming home with the silent and dark-cheeked bush-boy—
riding behind him at the drape of the day.

.

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses—the block
sways underneath on its tied-over chain;
The negro that drives the dray of the stone-yard—steady and
tall he stands, poised on one leg on the string-piece;
His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast, and loosens
over his hip-band;
His glance is calm and commanding—he tosses the slouch of
his hat away from his forehead;
The sun falls on his crispy hair and moustache—falls on the
black of his polished and perfect limbs.

Detached from their context, the paragraphs which I have quoted suffer from apparent crudity and paradox. It is only by absorbing Whitman's poems in copious draughts, as I have said, by submitting to his manner and sympathising with his mood, that a conception can be formed of the wealth with which he scatters plastic suggestions, and of the precision with which he notes down line and colour.

The essence of Democratic Art, so far as Whitman helps us to understand it, has been sufficiently indicated. The divine in nature and humanity is everywhere, if we can penetrate the husk of commonplace and reach the poetry of things. There are, indeed, degrees in its manifestation. Special revelations, as in the life of Buddha or of Christ for instance, do not rank in the same class with the "ever recurring miracle of the sun-

rise." The heroism of an engine-driver, performing his duty, has not exactly the same moral quality, the same complexity of spiritual forces in play together at one moment, as the self-dedication of Menoikeus for the welfare of his native city, or the oblation of their lives by Cratinus and Aristodemus in order to save Athens from a god-sent plague.

The pioneer of Democratic Art wishes mainly to remind the world that our eyes have too long been blinded to one cardinal truth — the truth that virtues and beauties, wherever found, are of like quality, and their essence equally divine. Whitman insists upon this truth in a passage, which sounds paradoxical, but the grotesqueness of which is calculated to arouse intelligence :*

Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty angels with shirts bagged out at their waists ;
The snag-toothed hostler, with red hair, redeeming sins past and to come,
Selling all he possesses, travelling on foot to fee lawyers for his brother, and sit by him while he is tried for forgery.

The resplendent manhood of Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, "starred from Jehovah's gorgeous armoury," is of like quality with that of the three reapers. Do what we will, our imagination cannot transcend the stalwart strength of thews and sinews. We can clothe this strength with

* "Walt Whitman," 41.

grace, gift it with ethereal charm, inspire it with ideal fancy, wrap it around in religious mystery. But the beautiful, strong body of the man remains the central fact for art. In like manner, the spirit of Christ revives in the poor, ugly drudge, "despised and rejected of men," like Paul, "of presence weak, of speech contemptible," who devotes his substance and his time to support and, if possible, to save an erring brother.

This piercing through gauds and trimmings, this unmasking and unbaring of appearances, this recognition of divinity in all things, is the secret of Democratic Art. It is not altogether different from what Jesus meant when he said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, ye do it unto me." Nor does the supreme doctrine of redemption through self-sacrifice and suffering lose in significance if we extend it from One, imagined a pitiful and condescending God, to all who for a worthy cause have endured humiliation, pain, an agonising death. Not to make Christ less, but to make him the chief of a multitude, the type and symbol of triumphant heroism, do we think of the thousands who have died on battle-fields, in torture-chambers, at the stake, from lingering misery, as expiators and redeemers, in whom the lamp of the divine spirit shines clearly for those who have the eyes to see.

VI.

The most perplexing branch of our inquiry has to be affronted, when we ask the question: What kind of literature and art is demanded by Democracy? How is Art to prove its power by satisfying the needs and moral aspirations of the people who are sovereign in a democratic age?

The conditions under which art exists at the present time render a satisfactory answer to this question well-nigh impossible. In the past epochs, Greek, Mediæval, Italian, Elizabethan, Louis XIV., Persian, Japanese, the arts had a certain unconscious and spontaneous *rapport* with the nations which begat them, and with the central life-force of those nations at the moment of their flourishing. Whether that central energy was aristocratic, as in Hellas; or monarchic, as in France; or religious, as in mediæval Europe; or intellectual, as in Renaissance Italy; or national, as in Elizabethan England; or widely diffused like a fine gust of popular intelligence, as in Japan; signified comparatively little. Art expressed what the people had of noblest and sincerest, and was appreciated by the people. No abrupt division separated the nation from the poets who gave a voice to the nation. The case is altered now. On the one hand we have huge uncultivated populations, trained to mechanical industries and money-

making, aggregated in unwieldy cities or distributed over vast tracts of imperfectly subdued territory, composed of heterogeneous racial elements, the *colluvies omnium gentium*, reduced by commerce and science and politics to a complex of shrewdly-acting, keenly-trafficking, dumbly-thinking personalities, bound together by superficial education in the commonest rudiments of knowledge, without strong national notes of difference, and without any specific bias toward a particular form of self-expression. On the other hand we have cosmopolitan men of letters, poets, painters, sculptors, architects, living for the most part upon the traditions of the past, working these up into new shapes of beauty with power and subtlety, but taking no direct hold on the masses, of whom they are contentedly ignorant, manifesting in no region of the world a marked national type of utterance, embodying no religion in their work, destined apparently to bequeath to the future an image of the nineteenth century in its confused Titanic energy, diffused culture, and mental chaos.

Is Democratic Art possible in these circumstances? Can we hope that the men who write poems, paint pictures, carve statues, shall enter once again into vital *rapport* with the people who compose the nations—the people who are now so far more puissant and important than they ever were before in the world's history? Is there to be any place

for art in the real life of the future? Or are we about to realise the dream of Dupont in De Musset's satirical dialogue?

> Sur deux rayons de fer un chemin magnifique
> De Paris à Péking ceindra ma république.
> Là, cent peuples divers, confondant leur jargon,
> Feront une Babel d'un colossal wagon.
> Là, de sa roue en feu le coche humanitaire
> Usera jusqu'aux os les muscles de la terre.
> Du haut de ce vaisseau les hommes stupéfaits
> Ne verront qu'une mer de choux et de navets.
> Le monde sera propre et net comme une écuelle;
> L'humanitairerie en fera sa gamelle,
> Et le globe rasé, sans barbe ni cheveux,
> Comme un grand potiron roulera dans les cieux.

In a word, do the people, in this democratic age, possess qualities which are capable of evoking a great art from the sympathy of men of genius? Or is art destined to subside lower and lower into a kind of Byzantine decrepitude, as the toy of a so-called cultivated minority?

It is questionable whether Whitman will help us to see light in these perplexities. Yet he has a burning belief in Democracy; and what is more, he is one of the very few great writers now alive who was born among the people, who has lived with the people, who understands and loves them thoroughly, and who dedicated his health and energies to their service in a time of overwhelming national anxiety.

VII.

Whitman is firmly persuaded that the real greatness of a nation or an epoch has never been, and can never be, tested by material prosperity. The wealth and strength, the mechanical industries, the expansive vigour, the superabundant population of a state, constitute its body only. These will impose upon the world, control the present, and be a fact to reckon with for many generations. Yet these must eventually pass away, and sink into oblivion, unless the race attains to consciousness and noble spiritual life. Literature and art compose the soul which informs that colossal body with vitality, and which will continue to exist after the material forces of the race have crumbled into nothingness. Hellas lives ideally in Homer, Pheidias, Æschylus; Israel, in the Prophets and the Psalms; the Middle Ages, in Dante; Feudalism, in Shakespeare. But where is Phœnicia, where is Carthage? Nothing survives to symbolise their greatness, because they lacked ideas and ideal utterance.

In America, Whitman finds the material conditions of a puissant nation; but he does not find the spirit of a nation. The body is there, growing larger and grander every day, for ever acquiring fresh equipments and more powerful appliances. Meanwhile the soul, the ideality of art and litera-

ture, commensurate with this gigantic frame, is wanting.

Viewed, to-day, from a point of view sufficiently overarching, the problem of humanity all over the civilised world is social and religious, and is to be finally met and treated by literature. *The priest departs, the divine literatus comes.** Never was anything more wanted than, to-day, and here in The States, the poet of the modern is wanted, or the great literatus of the modern.†

What is our religion? he asks. "A lot of churches, sects, etc., the most dismal phantasms I know, usurp the name of religion."

What is our national prosperity? "The magician's serpent in the fable ate up all the other serpents; and money-making is our magician's serpent, remaining to-day sole master of the field."

What does our huge material expansion amount to? "It is as if we were somehow being endowed with a vast and more and more thoroughly appointed body, and then left with little or no soul."

What are our cities? "A sort of dry and flat Sahara appears — these cities, crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics."

* These, and all other italics, are mine; intended to direct attention to the main points, as I conceive them, in my quotations from Whitman.

† This and the following extracts are taken from "Democratic Vistas."

What is our boasted culture? "Do you term that perpetual, pistareen, paste-pot work American art, American drama, taste, verse?" Instead of poets corresponding to the pitch and vigour of the race, he sees "a parcel of dandies and ennuyees, dapper little gentlemen from abroad, who flood us with their thin sentiment of parlours, parasols, piano-songs, tinkling rhymes, the five hundredth importation, or whimpering and crying about something, chasing one aborted conceit after another, and for ever occupied in dyspeptic amours with dyspeptic women."*

After this fashion, with superfluous reiteration, and considerable asperity, Whitman pours forth his deep-felt conviction of America's spiritual inadequacy.

But what does he demand in lieu of those "most dismal phantasms, which usurp the name of religion;" in lieu of "the magician's serpent, money-making;" in lieu of the "Sahara of frivolous and petty cities;" in lieu of "paste-pot work," and "dapper little gentlemen," and "tinkling rhymes," and "dyspeptic amours"? Democracy in the cradle, in its stronghold, as it seems, is infected with these congenital diseases. Let us

* "Dyspeptic amours with dyspeptic women," is a fine motto for the American society novel. So is another of Whitman's phrases: "The sly settee and the adulterous, unwholesome couple," for the modern French novel.

attempt to analyse what he proposes, and how he thinks the vital forces of the future are to be developed.

Whitman maintains that the cardinal elements of national greatness are robust character, independent personality, sincere religiousness. He contends that the democratic idea, properly grasped and systematically applied to conduct, will suffice to reconstitute society upon a sound basis, and to supply the modern nations with the ideality they lack.

Of all this, and these lamentable conditions, to breathe into them the breath recuperative of sane and heroic life, I say a new founded literature, not merely to copy and reflect existing surfaces, or pander to what is called taste—not only to amuse, pass away time, celebrate the beautiful, the refined, the past, or exhibit technical, rhythmic, or grammatical dexterity—but a *literature underlying life, religious, consistent with science, handling the elements and forces with competent power, teaching and training men*—and, as perhaps the most precious of its results, achieving the redemption of woman out of those incredible holds and webs of silliness, millinery, and every kind of dyspeptic depletion—and thus insuring to The States a strong and sweet female race, a race of perfect mothers—is what is needed.

In culture, as it at present exists, the forces are alien and antagonistic to Democracy. Therefore Whitman attacks it vigorously in a long polemical argument:

Dominion strong is the body's; dominion stronger is the mind's. What has filled, and fills to-day our intellect, our

fancy, furnishing the standards therein, is yet foreign. The great poems—Shakespeare included—are poisonous to the idea of the pride and dignity of the common people, the life-blood of Democracy. The models of our literature, as we get it from other lands, ultramarine, have had their birth in courts, and basked and grown in castle sunshine; all smells of princes' favours. Of workers of a certain sort, we have, indeed, plenty, contributing after their kind; many elegant, many learned, all complacent. But, touched by the national test, or tried by the standards of Democratic personality, they wither to ashes. I say I have not seen a single writer, artist, lecturer, or what not, that has confronted the voiceless, but ever erect and active, pervading, underlying will and typic aspiration of the land, in a spirit kindred to itself.

Culture is good enough in its way; but it is not what forms a manly personality, a sound and simple faith. "As now taught, accepted, and carried out, *are not the processes of culture rapidly creating a class of supercilious infidels, who believe in nothing?* Shall a man lose himself in countless masses of adjustments, and be so shaped with reference to this, that, and the other, that the simply good and healthy, and brave parts of him are reduced and chipped away, like the bordering of box in a garden? You can cultivate corn, and roses, and orchards; but who shall cultivate the primeval forests, the mountain peaks, the ocean, and the tumbling gorgeousness of the clouds? Lastly—is the readily given reply that culture only seeks to help, systematise, and put in attitude the elements of fertility and power, a conclusive reply?"

The only culture useful to Democracy is bound to aim less at polish and refinement of taste than at the bracing of character. "It must have for its spinal meaning *the formation of typical personality of character, eligible to the uses of the high average of men*—and not restricted by conditions ineligible to the masses. The best culture will always be that of the manly and courageous instincts, and loving perceptions, and of self-respect."

Since you cannot cultivate the primeval forests, and so forth, you must study and assimilate them. Since the people do not need to be refined in taste, but to be braced in character, you must penetrate their character and reproduce it in ideal conceptions. The right formative influences for modern literature and art have therefore to be sought in the people themselves; in the principles of independence and equality, of freedom, brotherhood, and comradeship, which are inherent in Democracy, and by right of which Democracy enfolds a religious ideal comparable to the spiritual liberty of the Gospel.

Did you, too, O friend, suppose Democracy was only for elections, for politics, or for a party name? I say Democracy is only of use there that it may pass on and come to its flower and fruits in manners, in the highest forms of interaction between men, and their beliefs—in Religion, Literature, colleges, and schools—Democracy in all public and private life, and in the Army and Navy. I have intimated that, as a paramount scheme, it has yet few or no full realisers and believers. I do not see, either,

that it owes any serious thanks to noted propagandists or champions, or has been essentially helped, though often harmed by them. . . . It is not yet, there or anywhere, the fully received, the fervid, the absolute faith. I submit, therefore, that the fruition of Democracy on aught like a grand scale, resides altogether in the future.

Meanwhile, for those who believe that national greatness can only be tested by the spirit which a people manifests, it remains to fix attention firmly on the permanent and indestructible significance of arts and letters:

The literature, songs, æsthetics, etc., of a country *are of importance principally because they furnish the materials and suggestions of personality for the women and men of that country*, and enforce them in a thousand effective ways.

But what has culture, as yet, done to strengthen the personality of the millions of America?

When I mix with these interminable swarms of alert turbulent, good-natured, independent citizens, mechanics, clerks, young persons—at the idea of this mass of men, so fresh and free, so loving and so proud, a singular awe falls upon me. I feel, with dejection and amazement, that among our geniuses and talented writers or speakers, few or none have yet really spoken to this people, or created a single image-making work that could be called for them—or absorbed the central spirit and the idiosyncrasies which are theirs, and which, thus, in highest ranges, so far remain entirely uncelebrated, unexpressed.

Yet I have dreamed, merged in that hidden-tangled problem of our fate, whose long unravelling stretches mysteriously through time—dreamed out, portrayed, hinted already—a little

or a larger band—a band of brave and true, unprecedented yet—armed and equipped at every point—the members separated, it may be, by different dates and states, or south, or north, or east, or west—Pacific or Atlantic—a year, a century here, and other centuries there—but always one, compact in soul, conscience conserving, God-inculcating, inspired achievers, not only in Literature, the greatest art, but achievers in all art—a new, undying order, dynasty, from age to age transmitted—a band, a class, at least as fit to cope with current years, our dangers, needs, as those who, for their times, so well, in armour or in cowl, upheld and made illustrious, the feudal, priestly world. To offset chivalry, indeed, those vanquished countless knights, and the old altars, abbeys, all their priests, ages and strings of ages, a knightlier and more sacred cause to-day demands, and shall supply, in a New World, to larger, grander work, more than the counterpart and tally of them.

VIII.

So far I have followed Whitman in his polemic against the culture of his country and this century. Many of his prophetic utterances will appear inapplicable to Europe. Yet Democracy, whether we like it or not, has to be faced and accepted in the Old as well as the New World. Here, therefore, as across the Atlantic, Democracy is bound to produce an ideal of its own, or to "prove the most tremendous failure of time." Here, as there, "long enough have the people been listening to poems in which common humanity, deferential, bends low, humiliated, acknowledging superiors." And yet, here, as there, the people have arrived at empire.

It is no longer possible to apostrophise them in the words of Campanella's famous sonnet:

The people is a beast of muddy brain
That knows not its own strength, and therefore stands
Loaded with wood and stone; the powerless hands
Of a mere child guide it with bit and rein:
One kick would be enough to break the chain;
But the beast fears, and what the child demands
It does; nor its own terror understands,
Confused and stupefied by bugbears vain.
Most wonderful! with its own hand it ties
And gags itself—gives itself death and war
For pence doled out by kings from its own store.
Its own are all things between earth and heaven;
But this it knows not; and if one arise
To tell this truth, it kills him unforgiven.

In Europe, again, as in America, the founts of earlier inspiration are failing. Classical antiquity and romance cannot supply perennial nutriment for modern art. The literary revolution which I described at the beginning of this essay, dethroned those elder deities and threw the sanctuary of the spirit open. Science, the sister of Democracy, brings man face to face with nature, and with God in nature. A more ethereal spirituality than has yet been dreamed of begins to penetrate our conceptions of the universe, of law, of duty, of human rights and destinies. Art and literature, if they are to hold their own, must adapt themselves to these altered conditions. They must have a faith

—not in their own excellence as art, and in their several styles and rhythms—but in their mission and their power to present the genius of the age, its religion and its character, with the same force as the Greek sculptors presented paganism and the Italian painters presented mediæval Catholicity. If they cannot ascend to this endeavour they are lost.

"Literature, strictly considered," says Whitman, "has never recognised the People, and, whatever may be said, does not to-day. . . . I know nothing more rare, even in this country, than a fit scientific estimate and reverent appreciation of the People—*of their measureless wealth of latent power and capacity, their vast artistic contrasts of lights and shades*, with, in America, their entire reliability in emergencies, and a certain breadth of historic grandeur, of peace or war, far surpassing all the vaunted samples of book-heroes, or any *haut-ton* coteries, in all the records of the world."

This assertion he proceeds to support by reference to the great American war. "Probably no future age can know, but I well know, how the gist of this fiercest and most resolute of the world's warlike contentions resided exclusively in the unnamed, unknown rank and file; and how the brunt of its labour of death was, to all essential purposes, Volunteered." "Grand common stock! to me the accomplished and convincing growth, prophetic of the future; proof undeniable to sharpest

sense *of perfect beauty, tenderness, and pluck*, that never feudal lord, nor Greek, nor Roman breed yet rivalled."

We now understand what Whitman means by "the divine average;" why he exclaims: "Ever the most precious in the common. Ever the fresh breeze of field, or hill, or lake is more than any palpitation of fans, though of ivory, and redolent with perfume; and the air is more than the costliest perfumes."

Finally, something must be said about Whitman's attitude toward the past. His polemic against contemporary culture, his firm insistence upon the fact that "the mind, which alone builds the permanent edifice, haughtily builds *for itself*," and that consequently a great nation like America, a new principle like Democracy, is bound to find its own ideal expression or "to prove the most tremendous failure of time"—all this may blind us to his reverence for the arts and literatures of races and of ages which have passed away. How easy it would be to assume a contempt for history in Whitman is clear enough to students of his writings. From the pages which he dedicates to the use and value of bygone literatures it will be sufficient to extract the following paragraph:

Gathered by geniuses of city, race, or age, and put by them in the highest of art's forms, namely, the literary form, the peculiar combinations, and the outshows of that city, race, and

age, its particular modes of the universal attributes and passions, its faiths, heroes, lovers and gods, wars, traditions, struggles, crimes, emotions, joys (or the subtle spirit of these) having been passed on to us to illumine our own selfhood and its experiences—what they supply, indispensable and highest, if taken away, *nothing else in all the world's boundless store-houses could make up to us or ever return again.*

This is an emphatic reassertion of the principle that "dominion strong is the body's; dominion stronger is the mind's." Not for an age or nation, but for all humanity and all time, abides the truth that material strength and greatness are but bone, and thew, and sinew; literature and art constitute the soul. Therefore the prophets, poets, thinkers, builders, sculptors, painters, musicians of past ages and of foreign lands, abide imperishable, shining like suns and stars fixed in the firmament of man's immortal mind. Stupendous are they indeed, but distant, unfamiliar; appealing indirectly to modern hearts and brains. Our admiration for them, the use we make of them, the lessons we learn from them, must not degrade us into the frivolity of imitative culture. We have to bear steadfastly in mind that it is our duty to emulate them by creating corresponding monuments of our own spirit, suns and stars which shall shine with them "in the spaces of that other heaven, the Kosmic intellect, the soul."

Ye powerful and resplendent ones! ye were, in your atmospheres, grown not for America, but rather for her foes,

the feudal and the old—while our genius is Democratic and modern. Yet could ye, indeed, but breathe your breath of life into our New World's nostrils—not to enslave us, as now, but, for our needs, to breed a spirit like your own—perhaps (dare we say it?) to dominate, even destroy, what yourselves have left! On your plane, and no less, but even higher and wider, will I mete and measure for our wants to-day and here. I demand races of orbic bards, with unconditional, uncompromising sway. Come forth, sweet democratic despots of the west!

IX.

Thus, the upshot of Walt Whitman's message is that the people, substantial as they are, and full of all the qualities which might inspire a world-literature, have up to the present time found no representative in poetry and art. The *sacer vates* of Democracy has not appeared. "The fruition of Democracy, on aught like a grand scale, resides altogether in the future."

This is not the place to inquire how far Whitman has himself fulfilled the conditions of writing for the people. Judged by his acceptance in America, he can hardly be said to have succeeded in his own lifetime. The many-headed beast there, if it has not literally "trampled him in gore," turns a deaf ear to his voice, and treats him with indifference. Hitherto he has won more respect from persons of culture in Great Britain than from the divine average of The States.

X.

After reading the foregoing pages, some one will perhaps object that Democratic Art is nothing new, and that the thing itself called for the invention of no such name to designate it. "Have not the eyes of all but pedants and precisians been open to the poetry of common objects and of humble people?" He will then point to Theocritus and Longus; cite Virgil's Georgics and Bucolics; enlarge upon Dutch painting; run through the list of Defoe, Hogarth, Smollett, Morland, Wilkie, Crabbe; and wind up with special references to certain passages of the Elizabethan Drama.

Such reasoning does not meet the arguments advanced by Whitman; nor does it satisfy the claims which those who comprehend the word Democracy put forward. Yet it is worthy of consideration, if only for the sake of defining what is meant by Democratic Art.

The faculty for seeing beauty in the simplest people and the commonest things has, indeed, been granted to all poets and all artists worthy of the name. But this faculty, in the age on which we now have entered, will need to be exercised in a very different way and with far other earnestness.

When we consider Greek pastorals in verse and

prose, or Latin didactic poems upon rural life, we detect a note of condescension, a scrupulous avoidance of bare fact, a studious selection of details agreeable to the cultivated sense. The rustics pose, or are transfigured. Their humanity is toned down to elegance, and the landscape is sketched in accordance with the literary ideal of Arcadia. This way of treatment implies a suppression of the true and a suggestion of the false. While exalting imaginary virtues of simplicity, contentment, and industry, these idyllic and didactic poets ignore reality and make playthings of their models. From their insincerity we have derived the intolerable sham of the modern pastoral. What Democratic Art demands is an intelligent representation of peasant-life in its actuality: not such a distorted picture as Zola painted in "La Terre," where all the ugliest details are artfully extracted and agglomerated; but something which shall reveal the essential qualities of human virtue and vice, of passion and endurance, struggle and achievement, capacity for high and sordid action, in tillers of the soil. The poet and the artist must repel the temptation to prettify his subject by the addition of masquerade refinement, or to vilify it by exposing only what is brutal. He must be ready to extract its specific quality from the phase of life he treats, believing that it contains its own tragedy, its own dignity, its suffering, crime,

pride, nobility, and baseness. He must be able to recognise that there is as much real beauty in the peasant's husk as in the prince's—a russet beech-nut being no less beautiful than the ruddy rind of a pomegranate. He must feel that the implements of labour, the attire of reaper or of milkmaid, the woodland ways and field-paths of such folk, the light falling upon their homestead, and the simplicity of its interior, offer peculiar elements of loveliness which are wanting to the sumptuous buildings, stately terraces, and splendid costumes of Versailles or Villa d'Este.

In Dutch painting we find a genuine species, but a narrow species, of the type in question. There is no note of condescension, no avoidance of fact, no selection of details pleasing to the cultivated taste. Sensuous enjoyment of a vulgar sort has been sympathetically felt, and rendered with artistic delight in its surroundings. The beauty of the husk, such as it is, receives ample justice. Loving care has been expended on the development of light and shadow, colour, the modelling of household gear, the delineation of industries and occupations. But the result is unspiritual; the poetry, for the most part, is poetry of the pot-house. Democratic Art wants more than this. It does not merely look for humorous, or comic, or sensual suggestions from the people.

Hogarth and the painters of his kind, who have

addicted themselves to satire, need not detain us long. In "The Idle Apprentice," as in "Marriage à la Mode," Hogarth exposed the vices of society. His touch was impartial; and, in so far, he deserves to be called democratic. But the true note of Democratic Art, its interpretation of the people to themselves, its creation of a popular ideal, its vindication of the loveliness and dignity of human life apart from class distinctions, its recognition of the beauty which is inseparable from certain crafts and occupations, its perception of the divine in average human beings, cannot be demanded from Hogarth and his school. They, as satirists, show us chiefly that men can be bad alike in palaces and hovels.

We find more of sterling quality in Crabbe: if only Crabbe were not so grim, so weighed down with the prosaic misery of existence. Crabbe has the democratic sympathy; but circumstances prevented him from ascending to the democratic exultation. And here, too, Wordsworth, who might be claimed as a pioneer of Democratic Art in England, fails to strike the right note. He has much of the needful feeling, but too much of the interdicted condescension. In all his work there remains a certain aloofness from the subject, and a tendency to improve it for moral purpose. Born in an aristocratic age, he preaches to the people, or ostentatiously takes lessons from them, or shows obtrusively

that he is studying them. There is in Wordsworth little of frank comradeship or hearty faith, an excessive amount of what Whitman calls "copious dribble" about men and forces discerned by him in a complacent, purblind fashion.

It is hardly worth while pausing to consider whether Elizabethan poetry is Democratic. The whole body of literature belonging to that age was produced under the influence of monarchical and feudal ideas, and is therefore representative of an order which Democracy displaces. Its true greatness consists in a burning national enthusiasm; but the nation is still regarded as a hierarchy of well-defined classes. The sovereign, peers spiritual and temporal, clerks and clergy, untitled gentry, lawyers in their several degrees, yeomen, merchants, artisans, and peasants, build up society. Each class has its own duties, its own privileges, and enjoys that self-respect which proceeds from the sense of an assured immutable position in the commonwealth. There is, therefore, nothing really democratic in the manliness, the freedom, and the joyousness of Elizabethan poetry. Even the realistic dramas of Heywood and Dekker, which so delightfully set forth the beauty of humble lives and the virtues of the people, are not democratic. Whitman is right in saying that "Shakespeare is incarnated, uncompromising

Feudalism in literature"; nor is the truth of this remark affected by the fact that when Shakespeare lived, the feudal order he so vividly portrayed had practically become a thing of the past. Its vigour and utility decayed during the Wars of the Roses. But time's mutations are slowly effected in Great Britain; and three centuries since Shakespeare's entrance upon his career as dramatist, have not sufficed to purge the English mind of feudal notions. They survive, amid all changes of society, in the form of snobbery, class prejudice, lord worship, and stupid talk about the lower orders.

This being the case, it is not easy to indicate anything in our literature and art which bears the democratic hall-mark. Other European nations present the same general features of decayed, yet still pervasive feudalism. Switzerland, where democracy has been achieved in practice, has developed no genius for art creation.

Yet a few examples may be selected, which seem in part at least to yield the quality desired. Blake's lyrics, George Sand's village stories, Gotthelf's "Ulrich," George Eliot's "Silas Marner," Pierre Loti's "Mon Frère Yves," Rudyard Kipling's "Soldiers Three," Clough's "Bothie," some of Thomas Hardy's Wessex Novels, in literature, are on the right track. So is the great work of the Russian novelists, Turgeneff, Tolstoi, Dostoieffsky.

In art we may speak of Millet, so profound in

feeling, so dumbly eloquent, so tragic; of Mason, who, in spite of superficial affectation, expressed the poetry of simple life with a wonderful sense of music; of Frederick Walker, whose young working men and vagrant women assumed the grandeur of Pheidias without loss of reality; of Hamo Thornycroft, whose statue of the "Mower" deserves to be placed in the same rank with Walker's picture, "At the Gate."

These instances are not meant to be exhaustive; nor are all the works mentioned of equal merit. I fear that, with the exception of Millet's pictures and the Russian novels, they would find but little favour in the eyes of our aspiring and exacting critic Whitman. Such as they are, however, they illustrate to some extent the ideality which must in course of time be extracted from the people, if art is to regain vitality under the conditions of a Democratic age.

The duty of art in the immediate future is to manifest the immanence of the divine in nature and man. While doing so—pursuing her own chase of beauty, not moralising and not preaching, but seeing and unmasking the God hidden in the husk of things—art will once more serve the permanent spiritual needs of humanity. This is Democratic Art. The kingdom of the Father has passed; the kingdom of the Son is passing; the kingdom of the Spirit begins.

LANDSCAPE.

I.

A VOLUME might be devoted to landscape, if this subject were to be exhaustively discussed. Nor could the task be performed without full knowledge of the arts and extensive familiarity with the work of innumerable painters in all countries. My aim is not of this ambitious nature. In the present essay I wish to indicate what it is in modern ways of thinking and of feeling, which has given so great an importance to scenery in our literature and figurative art.

It is an error to suppose that the ancients were insensible to the charm and beauty of external nature. Much has been written about their attitude toward landscape and the parsimony of picturesque description in their poetry. Yet sufficient stress is rarely laid upon the difference between the Greeks and the Romans in this matter. Nor has it been made clear enough, perhaps, that classical literature in its later stages exhibits more of what

we may call the modern feeling than we find in Homer and the Attic writers.

The Greek way of regarding nature differed widely from ours, and encouraged a different order of artistic symbolism. In their religion the Greeks deified the powers of the universe under concrete forms of human personality. When they gazed upon sky, earth, and sea, the image of an idealised man or woman intervened between their imaginative reason and the natural object. The mystery of the woods and wilds was Pan. Fauns and Hamadryads started from the leafy shade of forest trees. Tritons blew blasts upon their conch-shells, careering on the crests of stormy billows. Nereids swam up from azure deeps to glide across the surface of calm ocean. Naiads shrank from sight among fern-tufted fountains. The evening star lured shepherds to his love, leaning in twilight from the ridge of Œta. The dawn, a rosy-fingered damsel, left the couch of gray and shadowy Tithonus. The sun-god stopped his steeds in mid-career at Hera's word, or lent his flaming chariot to mortals for their ruin. The maiden moon bent down at night to kiss her sweetheart in the solitude of Latmos.

Haunted by such conceptions, the poet and the artist could not look on nature as we do. A multitude of fancy-fashioned beings, with distinct characters and with legends of their own, arose

between his mind and the external world. Sculpture, the dominant art of the race in its best period, gave substantial shape to these creatures of myth-making imagination. When utterance was sought in verse or in plastic symbolism for the feelings stirred by landscape, all vagueness, all sense of the infinite, which might peradventure have been present to the artist's mind, slumbered there unexpressed and inarticulate. Graceful human forms emerged, and took their place in the forefront of his vision. The rest was but a background, blurred and indistinct. The sentiments belonging to it had no opportunity of coming to self-consciousness.

How widely and deeply this anthropomorphic sympathy with nature penetrated the Hellenic imagination, and determined its poetical creativeness, may be seen in the legends of metamorphosis. The reed by the river-margin had to be a girl pursued by Pan. The cypress was a slender youth on whom the wood-god doted. The pine, nodding to its fall from some high precipice, had erewhile been a maiden rudely clasped by the north wind. A daffodil reflected in the mirror of a lakelet, was Narcissus pining at the sight of his own loveliness. Hyacinths, anemones, sunflowers, almond-blossoms, crocuses—all the "children of the spring" and "nurslings of the meadows," as Chærêmon called them — were thought of as fair boys or girls

beloved by deities. So, when a Greek felt their charm, his mind instinctively reverted to the human tales of passion and of fate, whereof they were for him the living emblems. He did not moralise the pathos of their ephemeral bloom like Herrick, or apply them to his own emotions in didactic mood like Wordsworth. He told their stories again, and spoke of them as Adonis, Clytia, Phyllis, Hyacinthus, Myrrha.

This then was the Greek way of regarding nature; and it persisted in their poetry and art long after the faculty of making myths had been exhausted. Another kind of sentiment for landscape, as we shall presently see, grew up in the course of centuries. But so tenacious and conservative are the forms of art when they have once been stereotyped in verse and plastic shape, that the old legends, hallowed by association, kept their grasp upon the people's mind.

Turning from Greece to Rome, we find ourselves upon an alien soil. The Latin religion, though it had racial affinities with the Hellenic, and though these were emphasized by the early adoption of Greek literature as a standard, remained more abstract in its character, more rigid and utilitarian, less poetical and picturesque. Owing to the barrenness of their mythology, Romans were able to view nature with eyes undazzled by the mirage of the mythopœic fancy. The stiff gods

and goddesses of Ovid's "Fasti"—Robigo, Terminus, and the rest of them—intervened with no legendary charm of human fate and passion and of human adolescence between the Latin mind and landscape. Accordingly we find in the earliest and the latest of the Latin poets a feeling akin to our own—the feeling of the natural man returning to the womb which bore him and the breasts which gave him suck — when these came close to Nature in her solitudes. The deep and solemn passion of Lucretius, the pathos of Virgil, their common love for the Saturnian earth, their sense of things and thoughts too deep for tears, sounded in Latin poetry a note we do not hear among the Hellenes. There is in their verse the mystery, the awe, the feeling after an indwelling deity, the communion with nature as nature, which we are accustomed to call modern.

I have elsewhere pointed out that we must look for hybrids in all creations of the Roman genius. By modelling their art upon the Greek type, the Romans precluded themselves from developing a purely national style; and this is perhaps one reason why the difference between them and their Greek masters, in the matter of landscape, was not made more manifest. We are able, however, to perceive this difference when we have once recognised that their employment of the Greek

mythology of metamorphosis remained conventional and artificial.

Virgil deserves Lord Tennyson's felicitous epithet of "landscape-lover" more than any of his predecessors. Before he began to work, Greek art, in Sicilian idyls, and in mural paintings, had entered on a new phase. This Virgil continued, adding a richness of colour, a variety of observation, and a glow of emotion all his own, to the transcripts from nature which abound in his poems. These pictures, however, are suggestions rather than descriptions, exhibiting the finest sense of what is right and fitting in the use of language for pictorial effect.

Horace joins with Persius, Juvenal, and Martial in his keen appreciation of rural simplicity and homeliness, contrasted with the luxuries and vices of the city. Epicurean, Stoic, satirist, man of the world, they are alike true lovers of the country. Their enthusiasm for the farm, the wholesome fare, the rustic table, and the sturdy serving-lad who waits upon them with the blush of honesty and healthful youth, is unaffected. Their vignettes from Sabine or Tuscan hill-sides are touched with the truth and sincerity which spring from real appreciation and keen observation. The same may be said of Ovid and the elegiac poets, though the former, in his great descriptive

poem of the "Metamorphoses," was hampered and overweighted by the burden of a mythology which had no vital hold on his belief.

Catullus freed himself more completely than any of these poets from foreign influences. An Athenian or a Sicilian could hardly have written the episode of Ariadne in the Epithalamium of Peleus and Thetis, with its fresh and vigorous sketches of scenery; or the lines on Sirmium, with its deep home-feeling; or the address to the boat, with its affectionate sympathy for the rock-pluming forests where the planks from which the skiff was built were hewn.

While Latin literature was growing, that of Greece was declining. The process of decadence, however, advanced slowly; and some minor beauties, which had been undeveloped in the earlier stages, now assumed prominence. We find a distinct feeling for landscape, timid and subdued, but delicately true, in the Idyls of Theocritus. The poets of the Anthology, with Meleager at their head, show that the sense of nature had begun to disengage itself from merely mythological associations. Meleager can see flowers without thinking of boys and girls beloved by deities. He calls the narcissus "rain-lover," and the lilies are for him "mountain-wanderers." With the decay of sculpture, painting became an art of more importance. We have many indications that wall-frescoes were

a common feature of Græco-Roman architecture. The treatise of Philostratus called εἰκόνες possesses considerable interest, as determining the character of these pictures. It is clear that though figure-subjects of the sculpturesque type still formed the staple of plastic art, scenery was being treated with some degree of intelligent appreciation; and the same conclusion may be arrived at after a study of the Pompeian frescoes. This tendency of painting reacted upon literature. The books of the Greek novelists abound in exquisite landscape detail. Nature is always used as a background to humanity. But this background is sympathetically felt, and its main features are touched with an evident perception of their own attractiveness. In the hands of the novelists language becomes singularly euphuistic. They develop rhetorical conceits, and coin quaint imagery to convey the æsthetic impression made by natural objects on the human sensibilities.

The Roman poets of the Silver Age respond to this impulse. Passing over Lucan, Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus, and Statius, from all of whose works lovely pieces of landscape-description might be culled, I will invite attention to Ausonius, in whom, at the very close of the classical period, modern sentiment seems ready to expand. His poem on the Moselle has always been admired for its mastery of descriptive verse. His elegy on

Roses may be read in another essay of this collection, and its prolonged influence through modern literature has there been traced.* I shall not therefore dwell on these compositions here. But in order to show how mural painting affected literature, and how a refined feeling for natural beauty was then combined with Hellenic mythology, I will translate the opening lines of his mystical idyl, "Cupido Cruci Affixus," together with its dedication in prose to the poet's "son" Gregorius. The verses describe a fresco in a friend's house, which represented the crucifixion of Cupid by the heroines in Elysium — dames of ancient story, who had long since died for love—and the god's flagellation by his mother with a scourge of roses.

"Tell me," begins the dedicatory epistle; "did you ever see some shadowy fancy painted on a wall? I am sure you have, and that you have kept it in remembrance. At Treves, for instance, in the dining-room of Æolus, there is this picture which I will describe: Cupid is being crucified by women who were lovers — not those of our times, sinners by their own will—but dames of the heroic age, who justify their conscience and force the god to bow—they whose fate in the fields of lamentation our Virgil hath sung. I gazed upon this work of art with admiration, both for its

* "The Pathos of the Rose in Poetry."

beauty and its subject. Soon afterwards, the emotion of wonder in my mind merged in a foolish impulse to write verses. Except the theme, nothing pleases me in this production. Yet I submit my by-blow of the Muses to your kind attention. We love even our warts and scars if they are part of us, and not content with having paid the debt to our own natural frailty, seek that these defects in us should win affection. Yet why should I go about to win from you a favourable hearing for the eclogue? I am sure that you will take with kindness what you know to be a thing of mine. This I regard more than that you should praise it. Farewell!*

* I transcribe the original of these lines:

Aëris in campis, memorat quos Musa Maronis,
Myrteus amentes ubi lucus opacat amantes,
Orgia ducebant heroides et sua quæque,
Ut quondam occiderant, leti argumenta gerebant,
Errantes silva in magna et sub luce maligna,
Inter arundineasque comas gravidumque papaver
Et tacitos sine labe lacus, sine murmure rivos:
Quorum per ripas nebuloso lumine marcent
Fleti olim regum et puerorum nomina flores,
Mirator Narcissus et Œbalides Hyacinthus,
Et Crocus auricomans et murice pictus Adonis,
Et tragico scriptus gemitu Salaminius Aias.
Omnia quæ lacrimis et amoribus anxia mœstis
Exercent memores obita jam morte dolores,
Rursus in amissum revocant heroidas ævum.

"In those shadowy fields whereof the Muse of Maro sings, where myrtle groves yield gloomy shelter to lost souls of lovers, the dames of old were once assembled for their mystic rites, and each bore emblems of her doom according as she died on earth. They wandered in woodland vast beneath the niggard light, among tresses of wavering reeds and heavy-headed poppies, by silent lakes without a flaw and rivulets that have no murmur in their ripple. Along the margin of those waters, dimly seen through twilight, pine flowers upon whose petals writ in tears are names of princes and of boys — Narcissus gazing on his own fair face, and Crocus of the golden curls, and Hyacinth the son of Œbalus, and Adonis dyed in purple hue, and Salaminian Aias stamped with his deep tragic groan. These remembrances of death and sorrow, symbols of lamentation and of love, recall to mind the anguish of stern fates erewhile assoiled and buried in the tomb, and bring before those heroines the memory of scenes enacted by them also in the world above."

The sentiment for nature to which I want to call attention in these lines is exhibited by the poet's sense of atmosphere, his feeling for tone, his subordination of the figures to the composition. The whole forms a picture; and even the Greek mythology of the flowers is so treated as to recede

into a region of symbolic spirituality. The landscape suggested by these two hexameters:

> Inter arundineasque comas gravidumque papaver
> Et tacitos sine labe lacus, sine murmure rivos—

is no less charming than their rhythm is melodiously melancholy. We are transferred to some quiet Umbrian or Tuscan valley after sunset, when the waning pallor of the west slumbers in pools of scarcely flowing water.

II.

The nascent feeling for landscape which we see unfolding in the latest period of Greek and Roman art, had no opportunity of attaining to independence during the first eight centuries which succeeded to the downfall of the Empire. Such sentiments as had existed in the classical age were connected immediately or remotely with polytheism. Christianity introduced a vehemently hostile spirit, which in its reactionary fervour opposed God to nature. The whole fabric of mythological religion was suppressed, and nothing appeared to take its place.

Under the then prevalent conceptions of the universe, no intelligent being could take either scientific or artistic interest in a world considered radically evil and doomed to wrathful overthrow.

Man's one business was to work out his salvation, to disengage himself from the earth on which his first parents had yielded to sin, and to wean his heart from the enjoyment of terrestrial delights. Whether he succeeded or not matters little to our argument. In either case the theoretical attitude of mind implied in mediæval Christianity was inimical to knowledge and to art. Beauty came to be regarded as a snare. The phenomena of nature were vilipended as not worth a thought; or if any attention was paid to them in lapidaries, bestiaries, and the like, the childish monastic intellect whimsically subjected them to a system of allegorical interpretation.

Under these influences both literature and the plastic arts decayed. Architecture, the most abstract and utilitarian of the fine arts, bridged over the long tract of æsthetical vacuity between the death of Claudian and the rebirth of poetry in Provence. It owed this continued existence to its disconnection from ideas, and to its ecclesiastical service. Architecture was useful, and it was innocent. Accordingly, it lived a stunted life, while the sister arts were slumbering in the torpor of suspended energy.

The Scandinavians and Teutons, who now had to be absorbed into the fellowship of nations and to be educated by the Church, brought with them

nothing which could constitute a new condition for the sense of natural beauty. Like the Greeks, they looked at the world from the point of view of mythology. The cosmic forces were personified in their religious legends as ideal men and women. Stupendous remnants of their pagan imagination survive in Eddic literature. But the study of these sources shows that Norse poetry was ill-adapted to fostering that sympathy with nature *qua* nature, which had begun to germinate in the later stages of Græco-Roman culture. Such as it was, the dominant civilising energy, that of the Latin Church, laid it under a strict interdict.

Renan observes that the most important product of the Middle Ages was a sentiment of the infinite. This remark, vague as it seems, bears strongly on the subject we are now discussing. Classical polytheism interpolated a multitude of ideal personalities between the mind and nature. All these were swept away, discredited, consigned to oblivion, transmuted into devils, during the ascendency of mediæval Christianity. The soul was left face to face with God, while men and women continued daily to be born and die upon our planet. Thus a vacuum, vast as the universe, arose through the dispeopling of all that intermediate region which had been agreeably filled by gods and goddesses of various degrees. There was the self-conscious

spirit of man ; there was the transcendent reality of God ; there was the earth on which man dwelt, and the heavens to cover it as with a canopy. Instead of a Pantheon or Olympus, swarming with deities—in lieu of a comfortable world inhabited by semi-human personalities — infinity and fact environed human consciousness. Infinity, the vague, incalculable, all-embracing sphere, which God in ways unrealised by mortal fancy filled. Fact, the hard, stern, brutal fabric of man's dwelling-place, with its sufferings acute or blunted, its passions which were sins, its labour which was a curse, its pleasures which were temptations. Infinity and fact, both shadowy, unreal, and unimaginable ; God's world and the devil's world ; each only valuable to the soul in its *rapport* with man's eternal destiny when time should be no more. That was the new medium within which the genius of our race, when it recovered from the torpor of the glacial epoch, had to move. Infinity and fact. What would happen should theology relax her grasp upon the intellect, and men once more begin to gaze around with curious delight on their terrestrial dwelling-place ?

Looking back upon the past, we are able to perceive that when the twilight of the modern age appeared, when the ancient gods had been forgotten and Christianity had lost a portion of

its poignant spell, the arts and science of the present time were quickening, like seeds that slumber through the winter and await the spring. But an intermediate stage of long duration had to be traversed. To this we give the name of Renaissance. In it the intellect of man came painfully and gladly to new life through the discovery of itself and nature.

I cannot expatiate over the prospect here presented to reflection. Having indicated the broad aspect of the Middle Ages in relation to the topic of this essay, it is now my business to show in what way man recovered that nascent sympathy with nature, which had been so rudely interrupted. Landscape is a minor detail in the history of the Renaissance. But it is the one we have to keep in view.

The Latin songs of the thirteenth century, in so far as these touch nature, reveal a genial thawing of the spirit.* They dwell on the charm of spring-time in the country, and connect the freedom of the open air with pleasures of the senses. Classical literature is at work as a form-giving influence. But the artistic touch on mythology has altered. Bacchus and Venus and

* This subject has been more fully treated in my discourse upon the Carmina Vagorum, entitled "Wine, Women, and Song."

Neptune have ceased to be personalities. They reappear as names and symbols.

The German lyrics of the Minnesingers, the Provençal lyrics of the Troubadours, the Celtic romances of Arthur and his Knights, when these touch nature, are in like manner vernal. The magic of the May pervades them; the mystery of the woodland enfolds them. They are the utterances of generations for whom life has revived, who have escaped the winter of their discontent and bondage, to whom the world is once more full of wonder-breeding interest.

Humanity, as is natural, engages the poet's first attention. The earth is felt chiefly through the delightfulness of healthy sensations. The stars, and clouds, and tempests of the heavens, the ever-recurring miracle of sunrise, the solemn pageant of sunsetting, are almost as though they were not in this literature. A copse in April, a blooming garden, a grove where birds sing, a storm-swept sea-beach—these are the landscape pictures of that epoch. But gods and goddesses are absent; the flowers are flowers, not Crocus or Adonis; the birds are birds, not Philomela wailing for her ancient wrong; the oaks contain no Hamadryads, and the fountains murmur without Nymphs. Nature, though as yet a mere back-scene to humanity, has emerged as Nature.

At last comes Dante, with his keen incisive touch on natural things, his intense laconic descriptions of the world as it appears:*

Dolce color d' oriental zaffiro.

.

Conobbi il tremolar della marina.

.

A noi venia la creatura bella
Bianco vestita e nella faccia quale
Par tremolando la mattutina stella.

.

Qual lodoletta, che in aere si spazia
Prima cantando, e poi tace contenta
Dell' ultima dolcezza che la sazia.

.

A guisa di leon quando si posa.

.

Noi andavam per lo vespero attenti
Oltre, quanto potean gli occhi allungarsi,
Contro i raggi serotini e lucenti.

In these, and in a hundred similar passages of the "Divine Comedy," we feel that the poet has transcended the vagueness of the Middle Ages. A new spirit is awake in the world. Man looks

* Soft colour of oriental sapphire.—I saw and knew the light atremble on the sea-marge.—Toward us came the beauteous being, clothed in white and with a countenance that was as is the dawn-star when it trembles.—Like to a lark which circles free in air, singing at first, and then keeps silence, satisfied with the last sweetness of the note that fills her soul.—In semblance of a lion when he couches.—We walked on through the evening, gazing intently forward so far as eyes could reach, with faces turned to meet the last and lucent rays of daylight.

again with open eyes on nature, sees the earth as the ancients saw it, but without the medium of myth through which the Greeks and Romans viewed it.

Contemporaneously with Dante—though Dante hardly shared this movement—there began what is known as the Revival of Learning: that resuscitation of classical literature and art which exercised so potent an influence over the mind of Europe. In so far as the æsthetical appreciation of external nature is concerned, this contact with antiquity was not an unmixed blessing. It did much to emancipate the mind from theological preoccupations. It established a sense of historical continuity, and restored a truer feeling for the relation between mankind and the material universe. But it brought back the old mythology which had previously intervened between the mind and natural objects. And this mythology was no longer believed in. It reappeared as mere machinery, and literary or artistic artifice. Furthermore, the uncritical respect for classical tradition imposed fettering restrictions on creative fancy. For a long space of time, poets thought that they must imitate Virgil or Horace in their descriptions; painters only introduced scenery as an accessory to figure-subjects. Though men could paint the external world like Titian, they dealt sparingly and occasionally with its aspects.

To manufacture Tritons, Nymphs, and Fauns was an easy matter for dexterous masters of the human form. These antique personalities were accepted in lieu of waves and woods and streams. They had the double advantage of being less difficult to deal with than the real things they symbolised, and also of possessing the passport of classical tradition. This way of representing nature in figurative art harmonised with the intellectual conditions of the Renaissance. Accordingly, landscape, or the portraiture of Nature as she is, remained in a subordinate position.

This fact ought not to be attributed to the Revival of Learning only. There is profound truth in the saying that "the proper study of mankind is man." Man awakening to free consciousness at the end of the Middle Ages seized first upon himself as the subject of the highest art. Nature had to wait her turn. And her turn came when the cycle of purely human motives, within the sphere of that period's ideality, had been exhausted. It was at the close of the Italian Renaissance, after Europe had been saturated with the new learning, when science too was born, and men were gazing with purged eyes upon the heavens of Copernicus and "thy clear stars, Galileo," that landscape attained to independence. Five great painters initiated this new departure in the arts. These were Peter Paul Rubens, Nicholas Poussin, Claude Lorraine,

Gaspar Poussin, and Salvator Rosa — a Fleming strongly influenced by Italian ideas, three Italianated Frenchmen, and a Neapolitan.*

Before their appearance on the scene, landscape-painting had here and there been practised with great ability and sense of beauty on both sides of the Alps. Nothing can surpass the refined fidelity to detail with which John van Eyck drew and coloured that airy prospect over river, city, and snow-clad mountains, seen from the quiet mediæval loggia, in his picture of La Vierge au Donateur. Few transcripts from external nature are more impressive in their map-like, patiently symbolic style than Dürer's Fortune, S. Hubert, and Knight on Horseback in the sombre forest. Gentile da Fabriano's sunrise upon Tuscan hills is like the dawn of life in its quaint childish naïveté. It would be peevish to demand more concentrated poetry in the delineation of blue crags and sun-swept valleys than Titian gave us, or sweeter idyllic bits of country than the minor Venetians—Bissolo, Basaiti, Cima, Cordegliaghi—introduced as backgrounds to their sacred compositions. Giorgione in his masterpiece at Castelfranco translated the feeling of broad champaign and gently swelling lawns into pure harmonies of gold and brown and green and yellow. Tintoretto

* Rubens, 1577–1640. N. Poussin, 1594–1665. Claude, 1600–1682. G. Poussin, 1613–1675. S. Rosa, 1615–1673.

proved himself the master of a fitful, passionate, suggestive scenery, turbid with emotion and surcharged with meaning, tuned by imagination to the spiritual key-note of his varying themes. The gentle twilight reaches of Umbrian valleys in Perugino's and young Raphael's pictures have a melancholy charm peculiar to that region. Francia caught their grace, and painted lands of afterglow and dewy peace, with slender stems defined against the spaces of a dreamy, lucid evening sky. Lionardo da Vinci's drawings show that this versatile magician of the arts could sketch a bit of forest with the subtlety of a French draughtsman. Correggio makes us rest beside his holy travellers in pleasant woodlands by the side of babbling water-brooks.*

Everywhere, in fact, this art was waiting,

* The picture by Van Eyck above referred to is in the Louvre. Dürer's are engravings. Gentile da Fabriano's sunrise is in the predella of his Adoration of the Magi, in the Florentine Academy. Titian's Marriage of S. Catherine is a good example of his landscape—National Gallery. For Tintoretto's power over scenery, I would point to the Temptation of Adam, in the Scuola di S. Rocco and in the Accademia at Venice; to the Murder of Abel, in the Accademia; the Crucifixion, at S. Cassiano; the Last Judgment, at the Madonna dell' Orto; the Temptation of Christ, at S. Rocco. Perugino's and Francia's pictures need not be particularised. With regard to Lionardo, I was thinking of a little chalk drawing in the Queen's library at Windsor. At Parma there are beautiful landscape bits by Correggio.

ready to emerge. But it had not occurred to masters of the sixteenth century that landscape might be treated as an object in itself. They remained at the same point as the poets — Sannazzaro, Poliziano, Boiardo, Ariosto — whose descriptive episodes are exquisite, but are never allowed to divert attention from the action and passion of humanity. These remarks might be applied with equal truth to Shakespeare and the rest of the Elizabethan poets.

The importance of Rubens, Claude, the two Poussins, and Salvator Rosa is that they emancipated landscape from its traditional dependence upon human motives, and proved that Nature in herself is worthy of our sympathy and admiration. However critics may be inclined to estimate the value of their work, this at least is incontestable. Rubens fills his canvas with a stretch of rolling country—fields and miry roads and hedges—open to the flying lights and shadows of a breezy morning sky. Claude concentrates his thought upon the luminosity of atmosphere; whatever else he paints, he is always aiming at that. Gaspar Poussin delights in the brown mystery of heavy-foliaged trees with thunder-clouds or sultry heavens above them. Salvator Rosa transports us to the ravines of the Abruzzi, where rocks are splintered and chestnut-boughs hang broken from the giant stems. Clinging still

to the tradition that some historical or mythological subject is required to make a picture, these masters introduce Abraham, Odysseus, a sacrifice to Pan, or possibly S. Jerome with his skull, somewhere into their composition. But the relation between the human motive and the landscape is reversed. The former, which had hitherto been all-important, is now subordinated to the latter. The artist's energies are bestowed on working out the scene, the atmospheric luminosity, the open champaign, the massive foliage, and the mighty clouds. The figures are carelessly sketched in, and little heed is paid to emphasizing their action. They are lost, as it were, in the space, diminished by the majesty of nature. Man takes his position as a portion of the world, not as the being for whom the earth and heavens were created. He is drawn upon those broad canvases to scale with trees which overtop him, and with tracts of hill and vale on which he toils a moving speck.

It would be interesting to pursue this subject further. But I am not writing a history of the development of landscape-painting. It is my business to deal with ideas rather than with schools of art and pictures. Yet the work of the Dutch masters (independent of Claude and Poussin and Salvator Rosa, contemporaneous in date or somewhat later) cannot be neglected. They contributed

even more than these men to the emancipation of art in this direction. They frankly ignored the old tradition of historical motives in landscape. The aspects of the earth and sea and sky, the common occupations of mankind upon the fields and in their dwellings, proved for them sufficient sources of inspiration. Dutch painting filled the seventeenth and a portion of the eighteenth century with powerful production, at a time when the resources of Italy were exhausted. It delivered art from the pedantry of humanism, and anticipated the European revolt against classical canons of perfection. Still, the essentially modern enthusiasm for nature, of which I shall shortly have to speak, was not the guiding light of the Dutch painters. Rarely, if ever, do we detect in them a touch of spirituality, a hint of mystery, an imaginative sense of something underlying nature. This must be sought elsewhere. The first day-break of impassioned naturalism meets us in the work of Norfolk drawing-masters, by the side of English streams and lakes, within sight of Snowdon and Helvellyn. The water-colour painters of our school, at the close of the last century, continued landscape on lines suggested by the Dutch. Their choice of subject was, however, more poetic; their sentiment more delicate; their will to wait on Nature's moods and to interpret her suggestions more evident. Here we perceive the dawning

of that sun which climbed the heavens with Turner.

All this while, in literature, classical standards of taste continued to prevail. External nature was treated by the poets of Europe throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the condescension proper to polite scholars. The religion of that age was formal. Science went slowly forwards, burrowing like a mole beneath the surface of received ideas, and altering the fundamental relations of thought mainly by the demonstration of astronomical laws. A thoroughgoing change was being gradually prepared in our conception of the universal order. Crude guesses, prefiguring the solid discoveries of geology, the study of primitive society, and the science of comparative biology, jostled with substantial acquisitions of exact knowledge in chemistry and the classification of beasts and vegetables. Man's place in the world was on the point of being apprehended. Nevertheless, the inevitable collision between theology and science — the coming reconstruction of opinion regarding the relation of God to the universe and of mankind to this planet—had as yet been hardly dreamed of. It is true that the elaborate structures of orthodox divinity were on the verge of being rudely shaken. Yet few minds forecast the revolution; and theologians imagined that they were moving with the

current of modern thought when they borrowed a shallow scheme of teleological optimism from what they deigned to notice in the sciences.

III.

The great creation of the Middle Ages, according to M. Renan, was the sentiment of the Infinite. We have further defined this saying by showing how Christianity banished from heaven and earth the antique deities and demigods, the girls and boys transmuted into trees and flowers and waterfalls, leaving man alone in a world of which he had no positive knowledge, face to face with a supreme abstraction, God. This God, imagined omniscient and omnipresent, was also imagined as separate from both nature and man. He had brought the universe into existence by his word; and he could dissolve it in the twinkling of an eye. The Infinite thus became the sole eventual reality. All else was illusion, mirage, depending on the divine caprice.

But our mind cannot remain satisfied with abstractions. The vacuum created by the demolition of mythological lumber was therefore filled to some extent by another set of polytheistic deities—Christ, Mary, Saints, Martyrs, Angels, Devils. These, however, unlike the deities of paganism, had no relation to nature. So far as the material universe was concerned, that remained

empty. The hierarchy of the Church triumphant were moral entities personified—ideals of human love, struggle, patience, faith, purity, and sorrowing experience.

When at last man's affection for his home prevailed over the figments of scholastic theology, humanism attempted to fill up the void of nature, by reintroducing the personalities of classical mythology. These, having lost their hold upon the faith of men, were ineffectual—mere *chimæræ bombycinantes in vacuo*, monsters of the fancy spinning cocoons in the abyss of nothing. The Infinite remained a yawning gulf, requiring to be tenanted. With every year, nature became more and more a problem for curiosity, a tantalising complex of facts which had to be accounted for.

The force which was growing while theology declined, and which was destined to control the future, attracted slight attention and roused comparatively feeble jealousy. Bruno indeed suffered martyrdom for attempting to connect God vitally with nature. Galileo was gagged for a different kind of indiscretion. Spinoza, after his harmless life and obscure death, won the reputation of a venomous atheist. Still the reconstructive energy of modern thought moved onwards, acting most effectively where it was least articulate. Theology slighted nature from the outset, and continued to

regard the material universe as a field in which the curiosity of man might be allowed to range. She failed to perceive that the Infinite, brought into paramount importance by herself, would eventually have to be identified with nature. Science, meanwhile, the real and rising force, waxed in obscurity, wisely refraining from hostile contact with waning orthodoxy, until it became a giant which might not be withstood. Like the gourd of Jonah's vision, it grew and overspread the heavens. Silently, imperceptibly, science asserted its right and power to solve the problem of Infinity, and filled the void of nature with a living spirit. God was re-discovered in the universe. That whole, of which man forms a part, appeared the manifestation of Deity.

While this process in the ground-work of thought was unfolding, various causes contributed to the decay of mediæval Christian mythology. The principal of these may be enumerated: first, criticism applied to documents and historical testimony; second, the politico-religious movement of the Reformation; last, but not least, although it seems remote from things of mortal life—the substitution of the sun for the earth as the centre of our sidereal system.

Pagan myths, reintroduced by humanism like a spectral *corps de ballet* on the empty scene of nature, had never been accepted by the modern

mind as more than metaphorical. The vacuum, the blank created by the downfall of paganism, the void space out of which issued our sense of Infinity, seemed as though it would become more forlorn and oppressive than ever. Such indeed it was in the Protestant theology of the last century, when any palpitating human heart took heed of it. But science had already begun to occupy this void with a hundred forms of knowledge — with the new astronomy, with chemistry, with electricity, with geology, biology, and the clinching doctrine of the conservation of energy. All tended to the conclusion that infinity and fact, the dual constituents of our environment, form one coherent being of which humanity is an important integer.

The notion of a spirit immanent in Nature, sustaining sun, and stars, and man, and beasts, and trees, was not new. It had been held by many antique sages. Virgil expressed it in his perfect literary way : *

> One Life through all the immense creation runs,
> One Spirit is the moon's, the sea's, the sun's;
> All forms in the air that fly, on the earth that creep,
> And the unknown nameless creatures of the deep—
> Each breathing thing obeys one Mind's control,
> And in all substance is a single soul.

* I borrow Mr. F. W. H. Myers' admirable version from "Essays Classical," p. 173.

Orphic poets, Stoics, and Neoplatonists uttered the same idea with keener, more mystic ardour. Under the dominance of Christianity this notion had no opportunity of moulding thought. But it reappeared in the dawn of modern science, at the moment when Copernicus revolutionised our theory of the universe. Bruno maintained it with a burning rhetoric, a passion of conviction, and a cogency of demonstration for the imaginative reason, which brought him to the stake. Other philosophers of sundry sects and orders, mystics, deists, professed pantheists, developed it in various ways to suit their several speculations. It was rhymed by Pope in well-turned couplets:

> All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
> Whose body nature is, and God the soul;
> That, changed through all, and yet in all the same,
> Great in the earth as in the ethereal frame,
> Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
> Glows in the stars and blossoms in the trees,
> Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
> Spreads undivided, operates unspent;
> Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
> As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
> As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,
> As the rapt seraph that adores and burns:
> To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
> He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

In these meditations of the poets and the sages there inhered an element of visionary unsubstantial rapture. Attractive as the speculation may have

seemed to minds of a certain stamp, it rested on no arguments of probability derived from fact. Theology was justified in neglecting such cloud-castles as the dreams of a disordered mind, until the moment when science, steadily accumulating knowledge without prophesying, had prepared a theory of the universe which necessitated either the abandonment of God as the supreme hypothesis, or else the acceptation of the world as God made manifest in fact, co-extensive with infinity.

It is not needful to pursue this analysis, or to force a conclusion as to the right way of solving the suggested problem. Else I should have to show to what a large extent the idealists of Germany, from Kant to Hegel, by their methods of criticism and *a priori* speculation, stimulated the growing conception of inherent spirituality and unity in nature. For the purpose of this essay it is enough to have pointed out how the modern enthusiasm, which we may call cosmic, sprang up in close connection with ideas like these, and how it is related to the development of science which has given such ideas a foundation of probability. Whether we call ourselves idealists or materialists signifies little. What remains indisputable is that man's interest in the world around him has been enormously developed by the decline of mediæval theology and the progressive expansion of scientific curiosity. That alone constitutes a new sphere of

thought for art to work in, pregnant with ideality denied to Greece and Rome, to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. It helps to account for the importance of landscape in the present century, and encourages a belief that there remains a wide scope for it in the future.

Poetry, being the most articulate of the arts, the most susceptive and expressive of pure thought, is the first to indicate the entrance of formative ideas into the æsthetic region. We must therefore interrogate the poets of this century at its commencement, in order to understand the change in our emotional attitude toward nature. For this purpose it will suffice to select Goethe, Wordsworth, and Shelley. When we compare the fervour of their verses with the colder utterance of Virgil or of Pope, it becomes evident that the venerable conception of Spirit immanent in the Universe has acquired a fuller certainty, a deeper glow, a warmer passion of enthusiasm. This conception now rests on inferences from the discoveries of physical science, and is inflamed with a hope that the cosmos shall be found at length to be an animated organism. It has passed from the realm of philosophical suggestion or rhetorical exposition into the region of religious conviction. Spirit gazing upon nature finds spirit there. The intellect is warmed with the vision of infinity made vital, instead of being refrigerated by a mere me-

chanical void. At the same time, by comparing the purely descriptive passages of these poets with those of their immediate predecessors—Thomson, Gray, Cowper—we shall discern how this modern metaphysical intuition has given a new touch and tone to art. Writers of the last century regarded nature as outside them, as a group of objects to be observed and catalogued, moralised perhaps, enjoyed, but never with the sense of spiritual affinity. With Wordsworth and the poets of his time, nature owns something correspondent to man's consciousness. A positive mythology, importing the imagination into science—if I may so express this revolution in thought about the universe—replaces the anthropomorphism of the Greeks, and fills at last the vacuum created by mediæval theology.

IV.

Of Goethe's pantheism no better example can be found than the Proëmium to "Gott und Welt." This poem has been already quoted in a previous essay;* and for this reason I shall not reproduce my English version of it here, contenting myself with the observation that this sublime hymn is the poetical counterpart of that philosophy which Bruno preached so fervently, and which Spinoza in his colder mood denuded of its religious elements—

* At the end of "The Philosophy of Evolution," vol. i. p. 40.

faith, hope, enthusiasm, inspiration. It expresses in lofty verse what Herbert Spencer has condensed in well-weighed words of prose.

> Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he (man) is ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed.

The scientific philosopher does not qualify that Energy by any other name. The poet calls it God.

From Wordsworth we must not expect the deliberate pantheism of a Bruno or a Goethe. Through whatever processes of thought he passed, this man was at bottom a believing Christian. On that very account his passion for nature, and the deep conviction expressed in his earlier works that the external universe is penetrated by a spirit which also fills the soul of man, have greater value for our present purpose. They prove how instinctively the modern intellect, at the beginning of our century, opened to the cosmic enthusiasm.

Those lines composed above Tintern Abbey, in which Wordsworth describes the two phases of nature-worship he had lived through—the earlier glowing and unreasoned, corresponding to the heat of youthful ardour; the later reflective and religious, persisting through the "years that bring the philosophic mind"—have been so often recited that they dwell in the hearts of every one.

Nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompence. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

Thus with Wordsworth the youth's love, simple and sensuous, for the beauty of the world became in manhood a deep mystic insight, piercing behind

the veil of nature to the spirit which constitutes both thought and the objects of thought. To God he cries:

> Thou, Thou alone
> Art everlasting, and the blessed spirits
> That Thou includest as the sea her waves!

Yet God, for him, does not include souls only, as the ocean includes the billows on its surface. God also includes nature, and thus the poet can call nature:

> The nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
> Of all my moral being.

It is thus, too, that Lucy drew her beauty, grace, and goodness "by silent sympathy" from woods, and clouds, and stars, and rivulets, and murmuring sounds. Nature being the robe of life woven perpetually by God, becomes at once the oracle and the audience of humanity. Man takes the meadows, woods, and mountains, and "all that we behold from this green earth," into his confidence, feeling that they are kindred to himself. In nature, as in the mind of man, there dwells one spirit, from whom we gather strength, and who sustains our aspiration. This is the meaning of that apparent paradox:

> One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can.

But, quitting this region of high speculation, let us see how Wordsworth's mysticism gave tone to his descriptions of landscape. I will select the poem on the Simplon Pass, than which nothing nobler in blank verse has been written during this century.

> Brook and road
> Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy Pass,
> And with them did we journey several hours
> At a slow step. The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> And in the narrow rent, at every turn,
> Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
> As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

For the sake of comparison, here are two passages from Gray's letters, one describing the ascent to the Grande Chartreuse, the other the descent of the Mont Cenis:

> It is six miles to the top; the road runs winding up it, commonly not six feet broad; on one hand is the rock, with

woods of pine trees hanging overhead; on the other a monstrous precipice, almost perpendicular, at the bottom of which rolls a torrent, that sometimes tumbling among the fragments of stone that have fallen from on high, and sometimes precipitating itself down vast descents with a noise like thunder, which is still made greater by the echo from the mountains on each side, concurs to form one of the most solemn, the most romantic, and the most astonishing scenes I ever beheld. Add to this the strange views made by the crags and cliffs on the other hand; the cascades that in many places throw themselves from the very summit down into the vale, and the river below; and many other particulars impossible to describe; you will conclude we had no occasion to repent our pains.

It was six miles to the top, where a plain opens itself about as many more in breadth, covered perpetually with very deep snow, and in the midst of that a great lake of unfathomable depth, from whence a river takes its rise, and tumbles over monstrous rocks quite down the other side of the mountain. The descent is six miles more, but infinitely more steep than the going up; and here the men perfectly fly down with you, stepping from stone to stone with incredible swiftness in places where none but they could go three paces without falling. The immensity of the precipices, the roaring of the river and torrents that run into it, the huge crags covered with ice and snow, and the clouds below you and about you, are objects it is impossible to conceive without seeing them; and though we had heard many strange descriptions of the scene, none of them at all came up to it.

Sixty years had elapsed between these descriptions by Gray and the lines on the Simplon Pass by Wordsworth. What a change there is in the way of feeling nature! It may be objected

that I am comparing prose with poetry. But Gray's Latin verses on the Grande Chartreuse and the touch on nature in his English poems at large have the same quality of appreciative observation from a point external to the object, whereas Wordsworth's lines are distinguished by sympathy with things that speak intelligibly to his soul because they form a part of that in which he lives and moves and has his being. The *præsens deus* of Wordsworth—*quis deus incertum, tamen est deus*—finds no place in Gray's philosophy.

Shelley's poetry, more than any other in our language, is imbued with a mystical Platonism, which displays itself, so far as our present subject is concerned, under a twofold aspect. In nature Shelley seems to have divined an omnipresent, all-sustaining, vitalising spirit, which assumed for his imagination the specific attributes of intellectual or ideal beauty. In Alastor he describes the fate of one who is for ever haunted by this beauty, burning dimly through things of sense, and eluding the neophyte in every appearance which takes form and fascination from the immanent splendour. In vain Alastor pursues his vision across the world: in vain the fairest creatures and sublimest scenes are offered to his gaze: it is only in sleep that his soul is comforted by the divine intuition; and

he dies unsatisfied, to blend with that which lured him through far lands disconsolate.

> He, I ween,
> Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
> Actæon-like, and fled affrighted.

This is one side to Shelley's Platonism. But not the less is there a Spirit of Life, an *anima mundi*, the power and vital heat of which is felt in thunder and the voice of birds, in the choral dances of the planets, in herbs and stones, in stars and exhalations and the soul of man. This life of the world has for one of its main manifestations the ideal beauty which led Alastor captive. The supreme expression of the world-soul, conceived as beauty, intangible, elusive, unapproachable, is given in that song which a voice in the air sings to Asia:*

> Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
> With their love the breath between them;
> And thy smiles before they dwindle
> Make the cold air fire; then screen them
> In those looks, where whoso gazes
> Faints, entangled in their mazes.
>
> Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
> Through the vest which seems to hide them;
> As the radiant lines of morning
> Through the clouds ere they divide them;
> And this atmosphere divinest
> Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

* *Prometheus Unbound*, Act ii., Scene 5.

Fair are others; none beholds thee,
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendour,
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever!

Lamp of Earth where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with brightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

The relation of man's soul to the world-soul, conceived by the poet as Life, Light, Love, and Beauty, is defined with more than usual precision in the following stanza from "Adonais." Keats has died:

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely; he doth bear
His part, while the one spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing the unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees, and beasts, and men, into the heaven's light.

It is apparent that, for Shelley, the beauty which hunted Alastor to his death on this earth, the beauty which in the mind of Asia was as a keen flame shining through the alabaster of the

universe, has become the attribute of power, vitality, continuous and all-pervasive energy. This is not poetry borrowing the forms of pantheistic speculation, but pantheism assuming to itself the faith and passion which transmutes speculative thought into religion. To this underlying intuition of indwelling deity Shelley owes the magic of his verse, whenever he deals directly with nature. Those aërial conceptions of living creatures in the elements, the ministry of the cloud, the wizardry of the west wind, the sympathies of the sensitive plant, the incantations of the Witch of Atlas, the raptures of the loves of earth and moon, the dæmon of the whirlwind, the chariot-races of the hours, the primeval genii of *Prometheus Unbound*—all these creations of the poet's mythopœic fancy are vitally connected with the poet's belief in the universe as a manifestation of spiritual force. For him it is not that subordinate divinities — fairies, angels, fiends, nymphs, fauns, and so forth—exist separately everywhere upon a slightly different plane from that of human nature; but everywhere, and in all things, in plants and beasts and men and earth and sky, eternally abides a genius and a spirit, whose particular epiphanies constitute one moving whole, a stream of life, a ῥόος as the Greek sage called it. "All things pass, and nothing stays; the cosmos may be compared to

the flow of a river, into which it is impossible to plunge twice and find it the same flood." Yes: but the stream, though ever changing, is perennially one; and all things, including man, are drops which go to make its continuity.

V.

If we were aiming at completeness, now would be the time to analyse the feeling for nature expressed by other poets of this century: in England by Byron, Scott, Coleridge, Keats; by Tennyson, Rossetti, Swinburne, Arnold, Roden Noel, Browning, Morris. This is not necessary. The result would hardly repay us for the tedium of the process. It will suffice to bear in mind that, during the nineteenth century, a special sensitiveness to landscape, varying in kind according to the temperament of each individual, has been the note of all our poets — good, bad, and indifferent. The exaltation of enthusiasm which distinguishes Goethe, Wordsworth, Shelley, appears rarely in their contemporaries and successors. Only perhaps in Roden Noel does the cult of nature rise to the fervour-point of philosophical and religious inspiration. Many critics will maintain that the poet is the better artist when he does not philosophise his emotions; that Scott and Keats stand on a superior ground as landscape-painters to Shelley and Wordsworth.

Yet, however this point may be settled, no one will deny the fact that literature in our age is penetrated through and through with a sympathy for nature which we do not find in the work of the last century, and which culminates in the poetry of Wordsworth, Shelley, Roden Noel.

To what extent painting has been directly influenced by this enthusiasm admits of much debate. It cannot, however, be doubted that the curiosity from which science sprang, and which so powerfully stimulated our poets, affected painting and controlled its practice. Artists, though they may not be self-conscious with regard to the main currents of contemporary thought, are subject to its stress. They enjoy one privilege denied to men of letters. Their vehicle of expression excludes reasoning; it offers them no inducement to formulate vague longings and emotions which escape too easily through language. Having to solve problems of composition, to study the forms of objects in their physical presentment, to grapple with technical difficulties of execution, they dally not with metaphysic. Deeply as these men enjoy the beauties of the world around us, subtly and profoundly as they comprehend them — with a far finer touch upon their quality than those who have not sought to translate them into pictures—it is their duty and their pleasure to reproduce aspects, not to penetrate mysteries. From the

passion which takes hold of poets and of mystics they are freed by the conditions of their art, albeit they too may be mystics and poets in the esoteric chambers of their soul.

The landscape-painter stands in the same relation to nature as the sculptor to the nude. Praxiteles, modelling a Venus, runs less risk of personal disturbance than the poet, lover of beauty, shut up for hours together with a living woman in a studio.

If this be the case, the founders of the modern schools of landscape might repudiate the suggestion that their work is in any way connected with the philosophical ideas which I have analysed. Nevertheless, they were children of their age, and obeyed its leading impulse. Art requires a spiritual element to move in, and responds with elasticity to the conditions of the faith men live by. So we may still regard landscape-painting as a species vitally related to science, and to religious mysticism modified by science.

The ideality of any art depends, as I have previously attempted to demonstrate, upon the thoughts common to the artist and his audience, which the former seeks to express. Sculpture was congenial to the anthropomorphic mythology of Hellas. Painting was congenial to the more emotional mythology of mediæval Christendom. These two arts drew abundant ideality from these

two spheres of thought. But when a new religious sense arose in Europe—when theistic conceptions, especially among the northern races, lost that sensuous concreteness which is adapted to æsthetical presentment—then it was found that the capacities of painting were by no means exhausted. The same art, obeying the thought-stress of the moving age, lent its powers to the nascent enthusiasm for nature. Pictures of saints and martyrs were succeeded by pictures of the world we live in. Painting ceased to be the handmaid of the Church, because the Church was losing hold upon the intellect. She became in turn the friend and teacher of generations for whom the earth was growing daily more divine. Now, in the work of the landscape-painters, spirit still speaks to spirit; the spirit of the artist who perceives, interprets, and preserves the beauty of earth, sea, and sky, to the spirit of men ready to receive it. What we owe to these hierophants of nature is incalculable. They are continually training our eyes to see, our minds to understand the world. They show how sympathy, emotion, passion, thought may be associated with inanimate things —for a masterpiece of landscape-painting, like a symphony in music, is penetrated with the maker's thought and feeling. Having passed through the artist's intellect, the scene becomes transfigured

into a symbol of what the artist felt. His subjectivity inheres in it for ever after.

So vast is the field of nature, so comparatively little of that field has as yet been subdued, that the resources of art to be derived therefrom seem inexhaustible. Nor have we any reason to apprehend that the religion of the future will fail to supply this branch of art with ideality.

NATURE MYTHS AND ALLEGORIES.

I.

SOME who read these lines will perhaps remember that enchanted region of Val Bregaglia, where the forest stretches downward from Soglio to Castasegna, through several miles of majesty and loveliness: the long aisles of secular chestnut-trees interlacing their branches overhead, the golden weight of foliage and fruit upon the boughs, the firm short sward and yielding moss around gray venerable stems, the sun and shadow falling on lilac crocuses and russet drift of scattered leaves; and, above all, the sculptured cliffs of Monte Zocco, with Bondasca's snaky glaciers uplifted in the luminous expanse of azure air, which separates those sphinxes of the Alps from our verdurous haunt among the clustering trees.

In such a place, earth, the ancient mother, seems to enfold man with loving-kindness and a soothing tenderness of beauty. Yet those

splintered mountains, older far than man or forest, the frozen rivers and the waste of stones descending from their girdle, the deep untroubled blue to which they rear their javelin points of cloven granite, the limitless and living atmosphere which softens them and makes the vision to our eyes endurable — all these things remind us of the unity in nature, whereby in some mysterious manner our tranquil pleasure in the woodland is linked with primeval forces — far away and unapproachable, yet ever near and active in our being — with the universal power that brought us into life, with cosmic tumult and with order, with interstellar serenity and gloom, with the everlasting clasp of God, who holds mankind and mountains in the hollow of His hand and binds the fabric of the world together in one vital whole.

Here I wandered one September morning; and, as it chanced, a reprint of Blake's "Marriage of Heaven and Hell" was in my pocket. Wishful to enjoy the scene and temper my delight with meditation, I flung myself upon the grass beneath an overshadowing tree, and read the sentences which follow:

If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through narrow chinks of his cavern.

How do you know but every Bird that cuts the airy way,
Is an immense world of delight, closed by your senses five?

One thought fills immensity.

What is now proved was once only imagined.

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged and numerous senses could perceive.

As I read, there happened to me something like that which happened to Petrarch upon the summit of Mont Ventoux.*

Blake's sentences, pregnant with mysticism, struck a deep chord and chimed with thoughts which were already stirring in me. For a while, I entered into spiritual union with nature, and felt as though the genii of those giant chestnut-trees might pace across the sward, or Pan appear, and saw that everything is infinite, and knew the thought which fills immensity, and hailed "a world of delight" in the hawk which hovered in the azure depth of air above the glaciers of Bondasca.

Such moments do not last long, but they leave impressions which contain the germs of future speculation. And so I have written this account of a September morning in the woods of Castasegna in order to introduce some reflections upon

* See above, vol. i. p. 297.

the value, real or metaphorical, which mythology still possesses in an age of scientific thought.

II.

Minute attention has been paid to the origins of myths and sagas; but we have lost sight of their enduring symbolical importance. Those ancient stories which our remote forefathers held to be the sum and abstract of world-wisdom, have been submitted to solar, meteorological, linguistic explanations. Learned and ingenious scholars have resolved them into tales about the sun and stars, the storms and clouds, and also into a disease of language. These methods, carried to extravagance, provoked a reaction of common sense, and another school of students are now seeking less mechanical solutions of the problem, by treating myths as relics of prehistoric culture, custom, and religion.

Few have the temerity to regard mythology as a necessary moment in human thought, the significance of which is by no means exhausted. At a distant period, myths were certainly ways of explaining the spiritual essence of the world and man to the imagination. That essence must, except in symbol and parable, remain for ever inscrutable and incognisable for the human mind. It is therefore by no means proved that the intuitions embodied in the myths of races like the Greek are even now devoid of actuality.

Nature myths assume an indwelling spirit in the universe, and express the sense of it by ascribing personality to inorganic things and vegetables. Allegory myths attribute independent existence to the moral and intellectual qualities of human beings. In the antique polytheistic systems, notably in the Hellenic, these two kinds were never wholly distinguished; for, when a natural object comes to be personified, the being thus evolved assumes the properties of humanity. Furthermore, all polytheisms known to us are composite of still more ancient creeds, combining divers elements of nature-worship and moral allegory in heterogeneous admixture. Still, for the purpose of analysis, the two species may be isolated, especially as we can no longer treat of either from the purely religious point of view. The utmost we can do is to raise the question whether the myths of antiquity do not still supply a suggestive way of regarding the universe as a spiritual whole, and man in his relation to it as a part thereof.

III.

Were they wholly fanciful, those myths and allegories of the earliest philosophers and poets? The seers who gave them form lived closer to all-nourishing earth than we do, pent as we are in populous cities and clouded with the culture of four thousand years. Perhaps they hold an

element of truth conveyed in symbol, to the significance of which we have been blinded by theological exclusiveness, and by the positive preoccupations of the scientific genius. Their truth, if truth they had, lay in their recognition of the universe as one live thing, and their belief in larger moral forces than those of individual men and women.

We cannot return to the state of thought about the world, out of which the primitive myths sprang. The habit of attributing a personality like that of man to everything in nature belongs to the far distant past, and will not be revived. But in its place the modern theory of the universe tends to establish the conviction that men and beasts and plants and inorganic substances are parts of one mind-penetrated unity. That abrupt separation of men from their environment, which formed the leading principle of philosophy and religion during the last two thousand years, begins to disappear. We recognise it as a necessary stage of thought, in the passage from grosser to more refined conceptions of the spirit which sustains and animates the hierarchy of being. We can no longer deny our kinship with the lower lives wherefrom we issued.

It is interesting to notice how the intuitions of early thinkers tally with the last results of modern science. A poet writing in the mystic

East, six centuries ago, described the ascent of man from nature in these verses :*

First man appeared in the class of inorganic things,
Next he passed therefrom into that of plants.
For years he lived as one of the plants,
Remembering nought of his inorganic state so different;
And when he passed from the vegetive to the animal state,
He had no remembrance of his life as a plant,
Except the inclination he felt to the world of plants,
Especially at the time of spring and sweet flowers;
Like the inclination of infants toward their mothers,
Which know not the cause of their inclination to the breast.
Again, the great Creator, as you know,
Drew man out of the animal into the human state.
Thus man passed from one order of nature to another,
Till he became wise and knowing and strong as he is now.
Of his first souls he has now no remembrance,
And he will be again changed from his present soul.

Jalâl Ad Dîn conceived evolution in a different way from ours. But he arrived at the clear and logical conclusion that man, having emerged from elements and plants and animals, retains a sympathy with them, loves and admires and uses them because they are the stock from which he sprang.

IV.

Unless we reject what is implied in the evolutionary theory of the Origin of Man, we are forced to concede that the old Hellenic religion—a

* From the "Musnari" of Jalâl Ad Dîn.

religion which has survived in all imaginative minds — contained a truth neglected and down-trodden by Christian theology. It rested on the following propositions. Not only man, but all things in the world, are full of soul. Soul can communicate with soul, not only in its human form, but also in nature; man's soul with the soul of forces that control his life, and with the soul of dimly sentient things beneath him in the scale of being. Our contemplation of the external universe is therefore not the mere inspection of matter alien to ourselves, but a communion with that from which we came and into which we go, itself penetrated with the thought that constitutes our essence. Only, in the rhythm of the universal life, it would appear that the creatures of each stage, while in that stage, cannot overleap the barriers of their defined personality, cannot mingle freely by sympathy and understanding with the creatures of another stage. Man, so long as he is man, has his most distinct affinities to man alone, and is forced to think of spirit as human. This does not, however, prevent him from entering into a sub-conscious intercourse with beings which are not human, and from recognising their essential spirituality. But when he does this in faith and earnestness, he represents his sense of their kinship with himself in terms of his own existence. To put it otherwise, he feigns men and women in

the objects of the outer world — the trees, the flowers, the stars, the rivers, and the mountains. Their participation in the divine life, of which he too is part, inevitably is expressed as personality, because he knows himself to be a person. He cannot even escape from thinking of God, or the spirit of the whole, as a person. This may or may not correspond to the fact; for what personality is, we cannot define. It is only a term for denoting the conditions under which alone consciousness is known to us at present. And we are compelled, being what we call persons, recognising personality as the *sine quâ non* of our conscious life, to find personality in natural things whenever we confess their common essence with ourselves.

Thus, then, we obtain a theory for the validity of ancient nature myths. The truth that they contained was the perception of spirituality in the material world; and though the crude imagery (zoomorphic and anthropomorphic) in which that truth was veiled may deprive them now of all but a symbolical value, yet they claim reverent consideration in an age which has to reappropriate their underlying principle.

Dryads, oreads, fauns, nymphs of wave and fountain, satyrs and Pan, Narcissus, Hyacinth, and Clytia, are but forms found for uttering man's sense of his affinity to woods and flowers and waters. When the Greek boy saw the hamadryad

stepping from her oak upon the anemone-starred sward around it, he did not wholly indulge a vision or yield to an hallucination. The oak-tree has a life, a soul, a particle of the divine *aura*, and with the recognition of this fact a nymph starts from the graceful stem to greet the soul of child-like man. When the Thessalian shepherd climbed at eve the crags of Œta, because he thought that Hesperus was calling to him for his love, he did not wholly dream: for who has not known the persuasions of the evening star, and dimly felt his heart drawn forth to it with longing? We cannot behold hamadryads hurrying across the lawn, or astral gods leaning to us from the saffron-tinted mountain crests. That way of feeling the spirituality of nature and of expressing our sense of affinity with natural things is perhaps for ever closed. It is indeed probable that both hamadryad and ethereal Hesperus were never seen except in reverie or pious act of faith by Greeks. Yet surely our intellectual life will be richer, and our intuition into the world will be truer, when we yield once more to the belief upon which those myths were founded, when we cease from standing aloof from nature and repelling the constant spiritual intimations she is giving us.

V.

Thus far I have been dealing with nature myths. For those myths which may properly be called allegories, a similar method of analysis can be adopted. But here the subject-matter itself is different, and the inquiry will lead to other considerations regarding the validity of ancient fables. I shall seek to give some reasons why we should not so lightly reject, as we are wont to do, those personified abstractions which men of former ages drew from the substance of their souls and called realities.

The essence of allegory consists in extracting some marked portion of our psychology from its environment, and presenting it alone for contemplation. We think of wisdom solely, or strength solely, or physical beauty solely; but having thought of these qualities in isolation, we are at once compelled to clothe them with bodies and regard them as persons. Human thought labours here under the same necessity as when it expresses our sense of affinity with nature in the forms of myth. When this step has been taken, the personage brought into ideal being cannot be merely wise, or merely strong, or merely beautiful. Together with personality, it has put on the multiplicity of human attributes. Therefore we obtain the complex deities

called Pallas, Herakles, and Aphrodite. The main abstraction to which they owe existence persists in them, and dominates their doings; but in the legends told about them other moral elements appear. The fables of Pallas, Herakles, and Aphrodite teach how humanity on a colossal scale, swayed severally by laws of wisdom, strength, and beauty, will behave under conditions similar to those of our experience—what their vigour and their frailty are, to what temptations they are subject, what special advantages they enjoy, and what distinctive functions they perform. Studying these moral qualities abstracted and incarnate in the allegory or the god, man learns to comprehend their influences clearly, to recognise his own proclivities and addictions with precision, to submit to those which attract him, to shrink from those which repel.

There is an ideal truth in allegory of this kind; and the physical types which artists and poets have created to express it are not fortuitous. We have, indeed, never seen a person wholly wise, or wholly strong, or wholly beautiful. Yet the thoughts of wisdom, strength, and beauty are present to us; and if these could take shape as human persons, they would find a body corresponding to their spiritual essence.

To return to the paganism which worshipped these abstractions as deities would be impossible,

and if it were possible it would be undesirable. Until proof be gained of intermediate gods, of angels and devils, of planetary powers and genii, we do not need to hold the creations of our mind in superstitious awe. Yet surely our moral life would be richer, our sense of spiritual potencies would be more vivid, if we were in the habit of inculcating lessons of conduct and discriminating the several types to which we may assimilate ourselves, by some such striking examples as polytheism held up for imitation and avoidance. The devotion of Hippolytus to Artemis was not a vain thing; nor was the need Orestes felt for purification before his mother's Furies an idle fancy. To answer that Artemis and the Furies were but the figments of antique sages and poets avails little, for who shall contend that the real people of Herodotus's history are more substantially present to him than the fictitious people in Shakespeare's plays? So long as you can touch a man and hear him speak, he differs indeed from the hero of an epic; but the memory of a man preserved in record differs little from the figment of a man in living poetry. It may even be contended that King Arthur of the story-books has exerted more solid influence than ever did King Arthur in the flesh, and that Hamlet is more philosophically effective than Democritus or Heraclitus. In fact, it is impossible to preserve that hard

and fast line which the understanding is apt to draw between the personages of actual existence and the personages of poetry, allegory, and fable. Only as ideals, as typifying a spiritual quality which endures and works for ever in the world of men, have either any true importance. This is why some German critics sought to prove that had Christ been but a myth, mankind would not have been the poorer.

There is another point of view from which one might defend the allegories contained in antique polytheistic religions. Their ideal veracity consists in this, that the spiritual qualities of humanity do not manifest themselves in individuals alone, but in races, classes, congeries of men. The race, the class, the community include and determine individuals in no less true a sense than that in which individuals compose and constitute those larger aggregations. It is therefore not only permissible but right and proper to regard the broader species of spiritual qualities as abiding potencies, external to the individual, claiming his homage or abhorrence — in other words, as the lords to which he is addicted, or the tyrants against which he struggles. Lust dwells in this man's heart; but lust, in a far more formidable shape, is abroad in a huge city. Are we logically justified in refusing actual existence to the holiness which conserved Israel, or to the

lechery which ruined Corinth? We need not be afraid lest we should sap the roots of monotheism by attributing reality to the collective vices and virtues of our common humanity. We recognise the reality of vice and virtue in the individual; why not therefore on a larger scale in the species and the genus? Catholic Christianity has remained monotheistic. Yet it allows a hierarchy of angels, a hierarchy of devils, and a whole multitude of saints, each one of whom personifies and symbolises some specific form of moral excellence. I am not contending, as I have already intimated, for the restitution of polytheism in its cruder forms, for the belief in angels, saints, and devils. I wish only to remind the present generation that, just as the makers of nature myths had a clearer intuition into the spirituality of the universe than we have now, so the makers of allegorical myths had a more vivid sense than we have of the spiritual potencies which surround us in the collective moral atmosphere of humanity at large.

The chief defects of allegory in mediæval and modern times are due to the want of real belief in it by those who make it. Neither Christianity nor science will suffer us to accept the pagan point of view here any more than in the case of nature myths. Instead, therefore, of forming an essential part of religion, allegory is confined to poetry and

plastic art, where it has hitherto lacked substantiality and conviction. The modern poet and the artist, though they treat of temperance or sloth as personalities, imagine that they are but using figures. They do not therefore put either their heart or their faith into their creation. Yet if we could but come to think of lust and anger, chastity and temperance, remorse and revenge, forgiveness and repentance, not as mere abstractions from ourselves, but as powers external to our soul, endowed with penetrative force to influence our lives, this would render the inner drama of the moral consciousness more real and poignant. To do so with absolute belief in these ideas as agencies independent of ourselves is perhaps impossible; just as it is impossible to believe again in nymphs and fauns. Polytheism cannot be resuscitated, and a recurrence to demonolatry would imply the abdication of the reason. Still, in those points where art and poetry touch ethics, it would be of benefit to humane culture if we could resume the habit of contemplating the broader species of our spiritual qualities in forms of personality adapted to their several essences. Possibly the sculpture and the painting and the verse of the future may yet produce monumental embodiments of vices and of virtues, through familiarity with which posterity will sensibly learn how awful in ugliness are the one kind, how awful in beauty are the other.

What right, moreover, have we, after all is said and done, to deny that each collective vice and each collective virtue of humanity may be a spiritual entity — a something corresponding to demonic or angelic essences? It is difficult to see that any harm should come to us, even though we submitted to regard them as living potencies influencing mankind.

VI.

Such speculations border the abyss of mysticism, and require a more minute development than I can give them here. It will be well in conclusion to recapitulate the points wherein nature myths and allegory myths differ, and the points they have in common.

The nature myth extracts spirit from the external world, and invests that spirit with human personality in forms appropriate to the impression made upon the human mind by each particular object. The allegorical myth abstracts from the human soul specific qualities, contemplates these as objects, and while doing so is forced to provide them with physical embodiments and personalities corresponding to their spiritual essence. Man, so long as he is man, cannot think a person except as both body and spirit. He cannot idealise his own spiritual properties except as embodied. He cannot detach the spirit he feels in tree or flower except as embodied. His reason may assure him

that this is a delusion. Both Christianity and science may warn him off that path of so-called falsehood. Christianity, indeed, by its lore of angels and devils, has accepted the principle of allegorical myths, while it rejects the nature myths as pagan. Science bids us cast both aside, and in so far is more logical. Where Christianity and science agree in condemning nature myths, they do so at the expense of making man deaf and blind to the inherent spirituality of the universe. All through the Middle Ages the best thinkers remained in the grossest ignorance and darkness with regard to nature on account of the false attitude forced upon them by theology. In modern times materialism, which is perhaps the hollowest and shabbiest *idolum specûs* which has ever haunted the cavern of man's intellect, owes its arrogance to a similar false attitude assumed by physics. Yet dogmatic theology is losing its rigid grasp upon the mind and heart of man, while science is leading us back by circuitous routes to the primitive belief in a life-penetrated universe. This being the case, we can indulge the expectation that though the Hellenic point of view with respect to myths of nature and of allegory may never be resumed, yet we shall be able better in the future to appreciate their value. Both poetry and art may be destined, on a far more elevated platform and with far profounder assurance of the truth, to

use them both again for the illumination and instruction of mankind.

VII.

The arts are not bound to occupy themselves exclusively with subjects of the present epoch. It is true that they are exhorted to do so by critics who profess themselves indignant with "the idle singer of an empty day." Such critics, however, have forgotten the treasures of old-world speculation, the jewels of experience collected by our ancestors in times when life was simpler, the types of ever recurring tragedy and ever fresh emotion which lie embedded in primeval myths and allegories. View them as we may, the thoughts of bygone races, of men who laid the foundations of knowledge, who first used language with a conscious purpose, who were closer to the origins of life than we are, deserve reverent study by all thinkers who accept man's emergence from the common stuff of nature. They possess not merely an antiquarian or an historic interest. They have something to say to us, which we run the risk of ignoring in this positive age.

It is not in the cruder myths of savage tribes that modern art can seek material for profitable treatment. These are too remote from our sympathies, although we recognise their value as the first stage in the development of human thought.

We must not reject them as alien to ourselves, or abhor them for their absurdities and indecencies. On the contrary, it is our duty to use them as the keys to those nobler forms of faith, which sprang up with the growth of the progressive races.

The secondary stages of mythology, when it has become the vehicle of thoughts and feelings essentially akin to ours, without losing its elder sense of the divinity in nature, are those which still abound in artistic motives of the highest beauty. Erudition enables us to approach the repositories of Oriental, Scandinavian, Egyptian, Semitic, Hellenic wisdom with intelligent insight. Yet we stand far enough aloof from them to be dominated by no religious preoccupations, and no local or national predilections. By the aid of criticism we can divest the legends of the world's young prime of their archaic trappings, and can discern what they preserve of permanent truth and durable instruction. Taste and sympathy reveal the large and simple grandeur of their outlines, the depth and universality of their emotion.

Examining a tale of Greek or Norse mythology, say the story of Perseus or that of Balder, is like opening a sealed jar of precious wine. Its fragrance spreads abroad through all the palace of the soul; and the noble vintage, upon being tasted, courses through blood and brain with the matured elixir of stored up summers.

Goethe says that he was wont to carry the subjects of his poems many years unspoken in his mind. By this means they became a portion of himself, secretly drawing nourishment from all that he experienced and learned upon the paths of life. When the time came to give them utterance and form, it was found that they suggested more than at the first glance met the ear and eye. They had acquired a many-sidedness, a vitality, a power of varied application, from their lengthy sojourn in secluded chambers of his consciousness. Myths have the same incommensurable and inexhaustible potency. Having slumbered for generations in the thought of mighty races, when they sprang to light in their due season, they were endowed with virtues far beyond their seeming. Pregnancy is the note of a true myth. The stuff of man's self has been absorbed and wrought into its substance by a process so analogous to growth, that the more we seek to fathom it the more we find there. The very quaintness of each detail is suggestive, capable of divers applications, fit for varied uses. The wisdom it presents in symbolic shape has been so worn into harmony with human needs and human experience, that it cannot lose its value till the end of time.

Our artists, whether poets, painters, or musicians, are therefore right to employ the legends of past ages for the expression of thoughts and emotions

belonging to the present. If used with true imaginative insight, there is no cause to fear lest the strain of modern adaptation should destroy the mystic beauty of the antique form. Myths, by reason of their symbolic pregnancy and spontaneity of origin, are everlastingly elastic. Thus Goethe found nothing fitter to his purpose than the Faust legend, when he planned the drama of the nineteenth century. Shelley poured his spirit of revolt and aspiration into the legend of Prometheus. Wagner, wishing to create a new musical drama, extracted material from the story of Tannhäuser, from Norse mythology, and from episodes of the Arthurian cycle. William Morris combined the mystic tales of many nations in his "Earthly Paradise." Tennyson rehandled the substance of Malory's "Morte d'Arthur." Landor touched the height of poetry in the tale of "Rhaicos," which transports us to a time when man might love a Hamadryad. In the poem of Agamemnon's meeting with Iphigeneia, he interpreted for modern minds the sublime pathos of the allegory of Lethe. In each and all of these instances, and in many more which might be mentioned, the poet's instinct was a sound one.

For plastic art, myths and allegories are of even higher value than for poetry. This is because they embody permanent ideas in sensuous form. They are therefore, by their very essence,

exactly of the quality which figurative art demands. I need, at the present moment, only point to the use which two of our greatest English painters, Mr. Watts and Mr. Burne Jones, have made of this material. I think it will be admitted that if we look for ideality in contemporary English painting, we shall find this mainly in the work of these two masters. And it is in the region of the myth and allegory that both have brought their poetic qualities conspicuously to view. Mr. Burne Jones, in particular, has proved that it is possible to treat legends so familiar as that of Perseus or the Sleeping Beauty, allegories so old as that of the Days of Creation, mythical tales so trite as that of Pan and Syrinx, with freshness and originality, evolving from their kernel something which is vitally in sympathy with modern thought.

VIII.

The line of thought which I have followed in this essay would have appeared preposterous and paradoxical a century ago, when mythology was treated from the point of view of Lemprière, and when the artistic handling of allegorical themes proceeded upon imitation of Græco-Roman or late Renaissance work. It will probably find but scanty acceptance even now. Yet there are present conditions favourable to its reception by tolerant minds, which were lacking in the im-

mediate past. The revolution effected by the romantic movement has delivered us from pseudo-classicism. At the same time spirituality has been restored to the material universe by science, which forces us to regard the cosmos as a single whole, penetrated throughout with life-producing energy.

IS POETRY AT BOTTOM A CRITICISM OF LIFE?

A REVIEW OF MATTHEW ARNOLD'S SELECTION FROM WORDSWORTH.*

It is both interesting and instructive to hear what masters of a craft may choose to say upon the subject of their art. The interest is rather increased than diminished by the limitation or the imperfection of their view, inseparable from personal inclination, idiosyncrasy of genius, or absorbing previous course of study. When Herrick exclaims, "There's no lust like to poetry;" when Goethe asserts, "Die Kunst ist nur Gestaltung;" when Shelley writes, "Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds," we feel in each of these utterances —too partial to express a universal truth, too profound to be regarded as a merely casual remark

* "Poems of Wordsworth." Chosen and Edited by Matthew Arnold. Golden Treasury Series. Macmillan, 1879.

—the dominating bias and instinctive leanings of a lifetime. If, then, we remember that Mr. Matthew Arnold is equally eminent as a critic and a poet, we shall not be too much surprised to read the following account of poetry given in the preface to his selection from Wordsworth:

> It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life—to the question: How to live.

At first sight this definition will strike most people as a paradox. It would be scarcely less startling to hear, as indeed we might perhaps hear from a new school of writers upon art, that "Criticism is at bottom the poetry of things," inasmuch as it is the critic's function to select the quintessential element of all he touches, and to present that only in choice form to the public he professes to instruct. Yet, when we return to Mr. Arnold, and compare the passage above quoted with the fuller expression of the same view upon a preceding page, the apparent paradox is reduced to the proportions of a sound and valuable generalisation:

> Long ago, in speaking of Homer, I said that the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. I said that a great poet receives his distinctive character of superiority from his application, under the con-

ditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth, from his application, I say, whatever it may be, of the ideas—

> On man, on nature, and on human life,

which he has acquired for himself.

A vital element in this description of poetic greatness is the further determination of the ideas in question as moral:

> It is said that to call these ideas *moral* ideas is to introduce a strong and injurious limitation. I answer that it is to do nothing of the kind, because moral ideas are really so main a part of human life. The question, *how to live*, is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied.

With the substance of these passages there are few who, after mature reflection on the nature of poetry, will not agree. That the weight of Mr. Arnold's authority should be unhesitatingly given against what he calls the poetry of revolt and the poetry of indifference to morals, is a matter for rejoicing to all who think the dissemination of sound views on literature important. It is good to be reminded at the present moment that Omar Khayyam failed of true greatness because he was a reactionary, and that Théophile Gautier took up his abode in what can never be more than a wayside halting-place. From time to time critics arise who attempt to persuade us that it does not

so much matter what a poet says as how he says it, and that the highest poetical achievements are those which combine a certain vagueness of meaning with sensuous melody and colour of verbal composition. Yet, if one thing is proved with certainty by the whole history of literature down to our own time, it is that the self-preservative instinct of humanity rejects such art as does not contribute to its intellectual nutrition and moral sustenance. It cannot afford to continue long in contact with ideas that run counter to the principles of its own progress. It cannot bestow more than passing notice upon trifles, however exquisitely finished. Poetry will not, indeed, live without style or its equivalent. But style alone will never confer enduring and cosmopolitan fame upon a poet. He must have placed himself in accord with the permanent emotions, the conservative forces of the race; he must have uttered what contributes to the building up of vital structure in the social organism, in order to gain more than a temporary or a partial hearing. Though style is an indispensable condition of success in poetry, it is by matter, and not by form, that a poet has to take his final rank.

Of the two less perfect kinds of poetry, the poetry of revolt and the poetry of indifference, the latter has by far the slighter chance of survival. Powerful negation implies that which it rebels

against. The energy of the rebellious spirit is itself a kind of moral greatness. We are braced and hardened by contact with impassioned revolutionaries, with Lucretius, Voltaire, Leopardi. Something necessary to the onward progress of mankind—the vigour of antagonism, the operative force of the antithesis—is communicated by them. They are in a high sense ethical by the exhibition of hardihood, self-reliance, hatred of hypocrisy. Even Omar's secession from the mosque to the tavern symbolises a necessary and recurring moment of experience. It is, moreover, dignified by the pathos of the poet's view of life. Meleager's sensuality is condoned by the delicacy of his sentiment. Tone counts for much in the poetry of revolt against morals. It is only the Stratons, the Beccadellis, the Baudelaires, who, in spite of their consummate form, are consigned to poetical perdition by vulgarity, perversity, obliquity of vision. But the carving of cherry-stones in verse, the turning of triolets and rondeaux, the seeking after sound or colour without heed for sense, is all foredoomed to final failure. The absolute neglect which has fallen on the melodious Italian sonnet-writers of the sixteenth century is due to their cult of art for art's sake, and their indifference to the realities of life. If we ask why Machiavelli's *Mandragora* is inferior to Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, in spite of its profound know-

ledge of human nature, its brilliant wit, its irresistible humour, its biting satire, and its incomparably closer workmanship, we can only answer that Shakespeare's conception of life was healthy, natural, exhilarating, while Machiavelli's, without displaying the earnestness of revolt, was artificial, morbid, and depressing. The sympathies which every great work of art stimulates tend in the case of Shakespeare's play to foster, in the case of Machiavelli's to stunt, the all-essential elements of social happiness and vigour. In point of form, the *Mandragora* has better right to be a classic comedy than the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. But the application of ideas to life in it is so unsound and so perverse that common sense rejects it; we tire of living in so false a world.

Without multiplying instances, it can be affirmed, with no dread of opposition, that all art, to be truly great art, to be permanent and fresh and satisfying through a hundred generations, to yield the bread and wine of daily sustenance for men and women in successive ages, must be moralised—must be in harmony with those principles of conduct, that tone of feeling, which it is the self-preservative instinct of civilised humanity to strengthen. This does not mean that the artist should be consciously didactic or obtrusively ethical. The objects of ethics and of art are distinct. The one analyses and instructs; the other embodies

and delights. But since all the arts give form to thought and feeling, it follows that the greatest art is that which includes in its synthesis the fullest complex of thoughts and feelings. The more complete the poet's grasp of human nature as a whole, the more complete his presentation of life in organised complexity, the greater he will be. Now the whole struggle of the human race from barbarism to civilisation is one continuous effort to maintain and to extend its moral dignity. It is by the conservation and alimentation of moral qualities that we advance. The organisation of our faculties into a perfect whole is moral harmony. Therefore artists who aspire to greatness can neither be adverse nor indifferent to ethics. In each case they proclaim their own inadequacy to the subject-matter of their art, humanity. In each case they present a maimed and partial portrait of their hero, man. In each case they must submit, however exquisite their style, however acute their insight, to be excluded from the supreme company of the immortals. We need do no more than name the chiefs of European poetry—Homer, Pindar, Æschylus, Sophocles, Virgil, Horace, Dante, Shakespeare, Molière—in order to recognise the fact that these owe their superiority to the completeness of their representation, to their firm grasp upon the harmony of human faculties in large morality. It is this which makes *classical* and *humane* litera-

ture convertible terms. It is this which has led all classes and ages of men back and back to these great poets as to their familiar friends and teachers, "the everlasting solace of mankind."

While substantially agreeing with Mr. Arnold, it may be possible to take exception to the form of his definition. He lays too great stress, perhaps, on the phrases, *application* of ideas, and *criticism*. The first might be qualified as misleading, because it seems to attribute an ulterior purpose to the poet; the second as tending to confound two separate faculties, the creative and the judicial. Plato's conception of poetry as an inspiration, a divine instinct, may be nearer to the truth. The application of ideas should not be too conscious, else the poet sinks into the preacher. The criticism of life should not be too much his object, else the poet might as well have written essays. What is wanted is that, however spontaneous his utterance may be, however he may aim at only beauty in his work, or "sing but as the linnet sings," his message should be adequate to healthy and mature humanity. His intelligence of what is noble and enduring, his expression of a full harmonious personality, is enough to moralise his work. It is even better that he should not turn aside to comment. That is the function of the homilist. We must learn how to live from him less by his precepts, than by his examples and

by being in his company. It would no doubt be misunderstanding Mr. Arnold to suppose that he estimates poetry by the gnomic sentences conveyed in it, or that he intends to say that the greatest poets have deliberately used their art as the vehicle of moral teaching. Yet there is a double danger in the wording of his definitions. On the one hand, if we accept them too literally, we run the risk of encouraging that false view of poetry which led the Byzantines to prefer Euripides to Sophocles, because he contained a greater number of quotable maxims; which brought the humanists of the sixteenth century to the incomprehensible conclusion that Seneca had improved upon the Greek drama by infusing more of sententious gravity into his speeches; which caused Tasso to invent an *ex post facto* allegory for the *Gerusalemme*, and Spenser to describe Ariosto's mad Orlando, the triumphant climax of that poet's irony, as "a good governor and a virtuous man." On the other hand, there is the peril of forgetting that the prime aim of all art is at bottom only presentation. That, and that alone, distinguishes the arts, including poetry, from every other operation of the intellect, and justifies Hegel's general definition of artistic beauty as "Die sinnliche Erscheinung der Idee." Poetry is not so much a criticism of life as a revelation of life, a presentment of life according to the poet's capacity for observing and displaying it in

forms that reproduce it for his readers. The poet is less a judge than a seer and reporter. If he judges, it is as light, falling upon an object, showing its inequalities, discovering its loveliness, may be said to judge. The greatest poet is not the poet who has said the best things about life, but he whose work most fully and faithfully reflects life in its breadth and largeness, eliminating what is accidental, trivial, temporary, local, or transmuting simple motives into symbols of the universal by his treatment. He teaches less by what he inculcates than by what he shows; and the truth of Plato's above-mentioned theory is that he may himself be unaware of the far-reaching lessons he communicates. From Shakespeare we could better afford to lose the profound remarks on life in *Timon* or *Troilus and Cressida*, than the delineation of Othello's passion. The speeches of Nestor in the *Iliad* are less valuable than the portrait of Achilles; and what Achilles says about fame, heroism, death, and friendship could be sooner spared than the presentment of his action.

The main thing to keep in mind is this, that the world will very willingly let die in poetry what does not contribute to its intellectual strength and moral vigour. In the long run, therefore, poetry full of matter and moralised wins the day. But it must, before all else, be poetry. The application of the soundest moral ideas, the finest criticism of

life, will not save it from oblivion, if it fails in the essential qualities that constitute a work of art. Imagination, or the power to see clearly and to project forcibly; fancy, or the power to flash new light on things familiar, and by their combination to delight the mind with novelty; creative genius, or the power of giving form and substance, life and beauty to the figments of the brain; style, or the power to sustain a flawless and unwavering distinction of utterance; dramatic energy, or the power to make men and women move before us with self-evident reality in fiction; passion, sympathy, enthusiasm, or the power of feeling and communicating feeling, of understanding and arousing emotion; lyrical inspiration, or the power of spontaneous singing—these are among the many elements that go to make up poetry. These, no doubt, are alluded to by Mr. Arnold in the clause referring to "poetic beauty and poetic truth." But it is needful to insist upon them, after having dwelt so long upon the matter and the moral tone of poetry. No sane critic can deny that the possession of one or more of these qualities in any very eminent degree will save a poet from the neglect to which moral revolt or indifference might otherwise condemn him. Ariosto's commonplaceness of feeling, Shelley's crude and discordant opinions, Leopardi's overwhelming pessimism, Heine's morbid sentimentality, Byron's superficiality and cynicism,

are cloaked and covered by the saving virtues of imagination, lyrical inspiration, poetic style, humour, intensity and sweep of passion. The very greatest poets of the world have combined all these qualities, together with that sound humanity which confers upon them immortal freshness. Of Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, Æschylus, Dante, Virgil, Shakespeare, Molière, Goethe, it is only possible to say that one or other element of poetic achievement has been displayed more eminently than the rest, that one or other has been held more obviously in abeyance, when we come to distinguish each great master from his peers. But lesser men may rest their claims to immortality upon slighter merits; and among these merits it will be found impossible to exclude what we call form, style, and the several poetic qualities above enumerated. To borrow a burlesque metaphor from the Oxford schools, a poet may win his second-class on his moral philosophy papers, if the others do not drag him down below the level of recognition; or he may win upon his taste papers, if he has not been plucked in divinity. It is only the supreme few whom we expect to be equally good all round. Shelley and Leopardi have, perhaps, the same prospect of survival on their artistic merits, as Wordsworth on the strength of his moral ideas.

It will be seen that we have now arrived at Mr. Arnold's attempt to place Wordsworth among

the European poets of the last two centuries. Omitting Goethe and living men, it seems, to Mr. Arnold, indubitable that to Wordsworth belongs the palm. This distinction of being the second greatest modern poet since the death of Molière is awarded to Wordsworth on his moral philosophy paper. "Where, then, is Wordsworth's superiority? It is here: he deals with more of *life* than they do; he deals with *life*, as a whole, more powerfully." There is some occult fascination in the game of marking competitors for glory, and publishing class-lists of poets, artists, and other eminent persons. For myself, I confess that it seems about as reasonable to enter Wordsworth, Dryden, Voltaire, Leopardi, Klopstock, and all the rest of them for the stakes of poetical primacy, and to announce with a flourish of critical trumpets that Wordsworth is the winner, as to run the moss-rose against the jessamine, carnation, clematis, crown imperial, double daisy, and other favourites of the flower garden. Lovers of poets and of flowers will have their partialities; and those who have best cultivated powers of reflection and expression will most plausibly support their preference with arguments. There the matter ends; for, both in the case of the poets and the flowers, the qualities which stimulate our several admirations are too various in kind to be compared. Mr. Arnold has undoubtedly given excellent reasons for the place he assigns to

Wordsworth. But it is dangerous for Wordsworth's advocate to prove too much. He has already gained a firm, a permanent, an honourable place upon the muster-roll of English poets. Why undertake the task of proving him the greatest? Parnassus is a sort of heaven, and we know what answer was given to the sons of Zebedee.

The final test of greatness in a poet is his adequacy to human nature at its best; his feeling for the balance of sense, emotion, will, intellect in moral harmony; his faculty for regarding the whole of life, and representing it in all its largeness. If this be true, dramatic and epical poetry must be the most enduring, the most instructive monuments of creative genius in verse. These forms bring into quickest play and present in fullest activity the many-sided motives of our life on earth. Yet the lyrist has a sphere scarcely second in importance to that of the epic and dramatic poets. The thought and feeling he expresses may, if his nature be adequate, embrace the whole gamut of humanity; and if his expression be sufficient, he may give the form of universality to his experience, creating magic mirrors wherein all men shall see their own hearts reflected and glorified without violation of reality or truth. Wordsworth's fame will rest upon his lyrics, if we extend the term to include his odes, sonnets, and some narrative poems in stanzas — on these, and on a

few of his meditative pieces in blank verse. His long philosophical experiments—the "Prelude," the "Excursion"—will be read for the light they cast upon the poet's mind, and for occasional passages of authentic inspiration. Taken as a whole, they are too unequal in execution, too imperfectly penetrated with the vital spirit of true poetry, to stand the test of time or wake the enthusiasm of centuries of students. Those, then, who love and reverence Wordsworth, for whom from earliest boyhood he has been a name of worship, will thank the delicate and sympathetic critic who has here collected Wordsworth's masterpieces in the compass of three hundred pages. They will also thank him for the preface in which he has pointed out the sterling qualities of Wordsworth's poetry. After speaking of Wordsworth's debt to Burns, who first in a century of false taste used "a style of perfect plainness, relying for effect solely on the weight and force of that which with entire fidelity it utters," Mr. Arnold introduces the following paragraph as to Wordsworth's handling of that style:

> Still Wordsworth's use of it has something unique and unmatchable. Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes: from the profound sincereness with which Wordsworth feels his subject,

and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself. He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first-hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of "Revolution and Independence;" but it is bald as the bare mountain-tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur.

This is assuredly the truest and finest description which has yet been written of Wordsworth's manner at its best; and the account rendered of the secret of his charm is no less to the point: "Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple elementary affections and duties, and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it." At the same time Mr. Arnold recognises the poet's inequalities, and the critical importance of his essay consists mainly in the broad and clear distinction he has made between what is more and less valuable in his work. "In Wordsworth's case, the accident, for so it may almost be called, of inspiration is of peculiar importance. No poet, perhaps, is so evidently filled with a new and sacred energy when the inspiration is upon him; no poet, when it fails him, is so left 'weak as is

a breaking wave.'" The object, therefore, of Mr. Arnold is "to disengage the poems which show his power, and to present them to the English-speaking public and to the world." He thinks that the volume "contains everything, or nearly everything, which may best serve him with the majority of lovers of poetry, nothing which may disserve him." Tastes will differ considerably about both clauses of this sentence; for while Wordsworthians may complain that too much has been omitted, others, who are anxious that our great and beloved poet should appear before the world with only his best singing robes around him, may desire an even stricter censorship than Mr. Arnold's. In the second lyric, "To a Butterfly," we find this stanza:

> Float near me; do not yet depart!
> Dead times revive in thee:
> Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art,
> A solemn image to my heart,
> My father's family!

No excellence of moral sentiment can redeem the banality of these lines. The last verse, sincerely felt as it may be, respectable as is the emotion it expresses, is from the point of view of art a bathos. A really fine narrative, the "Brothers," contains abundance of writing which, were it not Wordsworth's, might be described,

in the favourite phrase of "tenth-rate critics," as prose cut into lengths of ten syllables:

> And now, at last
> From perils manifold, with some small wealth
> Acquired by traffic 'mid the Indian isles,
> To his paternal home he is returned,
> With a determined purpose to resume
> The life he had lived there.

This is bald; but it is not "bald as the bare mountain-tops are bald." It is bald as a letter of introduction is bald, bald as the baldest passages of Crabbe. Can we expect Italians, accustomed to the grandly simple manner of Leopardi's country poems, to accept this? Or choose another example from a ballad called the "Power of Music":

> An Orpheus! An Orpheus!—yes, Faith may grow bold,
> And take to herself all the wonders of old;—
> Near the stately Pantheon you'll meet with the same
> In the street that from Oxford hath borrowed its name.

This is neither bald nor yet genuine; it begins with a conceit, and the epithet applied to the Pantheon is uncouth in its falseness. Can we expect our American cousins to tolerate the style of this opening stanza for the sake of the noble democratic spirit which breathes through the poem? The "Character of the Happy Warrior" is both conceived and written in the poet's state-

liest mood; yet it halts at intervals on lines like these:

> But makes his moral being his prime care
> By objects, which might force the soul to abate
> Her feeling, rendered more compassionate.

Will Frenchmen, habituated to look for sustained evenness of style in composition, recognise the "Happy Warrior" as a classic? These examples introduce a grave matter for consideration. No lover of Wordsworth could desire the exclusion of the "Brothers," or the "Power of Music," or the "Happy Warrior," from a selection of his poetry, however willingly they might leave the "Butterfly" alone. Yet the failure of perfect art in these three fine poems must prove an obstacle to their final acceptance by readers who make no national, or what Mr. Arnold would call provincial, allowance for Wordsworth. No such allowances are demanded by the work of Keats or Shelley, when subjected to an equally rigorous process of sifting, as that applied to Wordsworth in this volume.

Still if, after study of the greatest literatures of Europe, we feel convinced that Wordsworth is a classic, it does not greatly signify what other nations now think about him. As nothing can confer world-wide celebrity on an inferior poet, however popular at home, so nothing can prevent

a classic from attaining his right place in the long run. There is something slightly ridiculous in waiting upon French opinion, and expressing gratitude to M. Henry Cochin or to any other foreign critic for a sensible remark upon Shakespeare. However, as the question has been started whether Wordsworth is likely to become a poet of cosmopolitan fame, it is worth while to consider what these chances are. Mr. Arnold, comparing him with the acknowledged masters of the art in Europe, comes to the conclusion that he has "left a body of poetical work superior in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, to that which any of the others has left." What these qualities are we have already seen. It is the superior depth, genuineness, sincerity, and truth of Wordsworth's humanity, the solid and abiding vigour of his grasp upon the realities of existence, upon the joys that cannot be taken from us, upon the goods of life which suffer no deduction by chance and change, and are independent of all accidents of fortune, that render Wordsworth's poems indestructible. He is always found upon the side of that which stimulates the stored-up moral forces of mankind. If I remember rightly, he says that he meant his works "to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier, to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and

therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous." This promise he has kept. When he touches the antique, it is to draw from classic myth or history a lesson weighty with wisdom applicable to our present experience. "Laodamia" has no magic to compete with the "Bride of Corinth;" but we rise from its perusal with passions purified by terror and compassion. "Dion" closes on this note :

> Him only pleasure leads, and peace attends,
> Him, only him, the shield of Jove defends,
> Whose means are fair and spotless as his ends.

When he writes a poem on a flower, it is to draw forth thoughts of joy, or strength, or consolation. His "Daffodils" have not the pathos which belongs to Herrick's, nor has he composed anything in this style to match the sublimity of Leopardi's "Ginestra." But Leopardi crushes the soul of hope out of us by the abyss of dreadful contemplation into which the broom upon the lava of Vesuvius plunges him. Wordsworth never does this. The worst that can be said of him is that, as Mr. Swinburne said in a preface to Byron, he shreds Nature's vegetables into a domestic saucepan for daily service. Still the homely *pot au feu* of the moralist has no less right to exist than a wizard's cauldron of sublimity, and probably will be found to last and wear longer. Wordsworth has said nothing so exquisite as Poliziano upon

the fragility of rose-leaves, nor has he used the rose, like Ariosto, for similitudes of youthful beauty. But the moralising of these Italian amourists softens and relaxes. Wordsworth's poems on the Celandine brace and invigorate. His enthusiasms are sober and solid. Excepting the ode on Immortality, where much that cannot be proved is taken for granted, and excepting an occasional exaggeration of some favourite tenet, as in this famous stanza—

> One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil, and of good,
> Than all the sages can—

his impulsive utterances are based on a sound foundation, and will bear the test both of experience and analysis. In this respect he differs from Shelley, whose far more fiery and magnetic enthusiasms do not convince us of their absolute sincerity, and are often at variance with probability. In the case of Shelley we must be contented with the noble, the audacious ardour he communicates. The further satisfaction of feeling that his judgments are as right as his aspirations are generous, is too frequently denied. Wordsworth does not soar so high, nor on so powerful a pinion, but he is a safer guide. His own comparison between the nightingale and the stock-dove might be used as

an allegory of the two poets. Their several addresses to the skylark give some measure of their different qualities.

The tone of a poet, the mood he communicates, the atmosphere he surrounds us with, is more important even than what he says. This tone is the best or the worst we get from him; it makes it good or bad to be with him. Now it is always good to be with Wordsworth. His personality is like a climate at once sedative and stimulative. I feel inclined to compare it to the influence of the high Alps, austere but kindly, demanding some effort of renunciation, but yielding in return a constant sustenance, and soothing the tired nerves that need a respite from the passions and the fever of the world. The landscape in these regions, far above the plains and cities where men strive, is grave and sober. It has none of the allurements of the south—no waving forests, or dancing waves, or fret-work of sun and shadow cast by olive branches on the flowers. But it has also no deception, and no languor, and no decay. In autumn the bald hillsides assume their robes of orange and of crimson, faintly, delicately spread upon the barren rocks. The air is singularly clear and lucid, suffering no illusion, but satisfying the sense of vision with a marvellous sincerity. And when winter comes, the world for months together is clad

in flawless purity of blue and white, with shy, rare, unexpected beauty shed upon the scene from hues of sunrise or sunset. On first acquaintance this Alpine landscape is repellent and severe. We think it too ascetic to be lived in. But familiarity convinces us that it is good and wholesome to abide in it. We learn to love its reserve even more than the prodigality of beauty showered on fortunate islands where the orange and the myrtle flower in never-ending summer. Something of the sort is experienced by those who have yielded themselves to Wordsworth's influence. The luxuriance of Keats, the splendour of Shelley, the oriental glow of Coleridge, the torrid energy of Byron, though good in themselves and infinitely precious, are felt to be less permanent, less uniformly satisfying, less continuously bracing, than the sober simplicity of the poet from whose ruggedness at first we shrank.

It is a pity that Wordsworth could not rest satisfied in leaving this tone to its natural operation on his readers "in a wise passiveness." He passes too readily over from the poet to the moraliser, clenching lessons which need no enforcement by precepts that remind us of the preacher. This leads to a not unnatural movement of revolt in his audience, and often spoils the severe beauty of his art. We do not care to have a somewhat dull but

instructive episode from ordinary village life interrupted by a stanza of admonition like the following:

> O Reader! had you in your mind
> Such stores as silent thought can bring,
> O gentle Reader! you would find
> A tale in everything.
> What more I have to say is short,
> And you must kindly take it:
> It is no tale; but, should you *think*,
> Perhaps a tale you'll make it.

After this the real pathos of "Simon Lee" cannot fail to fall somewhat flat. And yet it is not seldom that Wordsworth's didactic reflections contain the pith of his sublimest poetry. Beautiful as the tale of the "White Doe" is æsthetically, it can bear the closing stanzas of precept:

> Grey-headed Shepherd, thou hast spoken well;
> Small difference lies between thy creed and mine:
> This Beast not unobserved by Nature fell;
> His death was mourned by sympathy divine.
>
> The Being, that is in the clouds and air,
> That is in the green leaves among the groves,
> Maintains a deep and reverential care
> For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.
>
> The Pleasure-house is dust:—behind, before,
> There is no common waste, no common gloom;
> But Nature, in due course of time, once more
> Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom.

She leaves these objects to a slow decay,
That what we are, and have been, may be known;
But, at the coming of the milder day,
These monuments shall all be overgrown.

Up to this point the application of moral ideas has been made with perfect success. The artistic charm has not been broken. But the last stanza falls into the sermonising style, as though the poet's inspiration failed him, and a pedagogue, with no clear conception of the unalterable order of the material universe, had taken his place:

One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals,
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.

The tone I have attempted to describe, as of some clear upland climate, at once soothing and invigorating, austere but gifted with rare charms for those who have submitted to its influence, this tone, unique in poetry, outside the range, perhaps, of Scandinavian literature, will secure for Wordsworth, in England at any rate, an immortality of love and fame. He is, moreover, the poet of man's dependence upon Nature. More deeply, because more calmly, than Shelley, with the passionate enthusiasms of youth subdued to the firm convictions

of maturity, he expressed for modern men that creed which, for want of a better word, we designate as Pantheism, but which might be described as the inner soul of Science, the bloom of feeling and enthusiasm destined to ennoble and to poetise our knowledge of the world and of ourselves. In proportion as the sciences make us more intimately acquainted with man's relation to the universe, while the sources of life and thought remain still inscrutable, Wordsworth must take stronger and firmer hold on minds which recognise a mystery in Nature far beyond our ken. What Science is not called on to supply, the fervour and the piety that humanise her truths, and bring them into harmony with permanent emotions of the soul, may be found in all that Wordsworth wrote.

The time might come, indeed may not be distant, when lines like those which I have quoted above (p. 113) from the poem composed at Tintern Abbey should be sung in hours of worship by congregations for whom the "cosmic emotion" is a reality and a religion.

Wordsworth, again, is the poet of the simple and the permanent in social life. He has shown that average human nature may be made to yield the motives of the noblest poems, instinct with passion, glowing with beauty, needing only the insight and the touch of the artist to dis-

engage them from the coarse material of commonplace.

> The moving accident is not my trade :
> To freeze the blood I have no ready arts :
> 'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,
> To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.

Should the day arrive when society shall be remodelled upon principles of true democracy, when "plain living and high thinking" shall become the rule, when the vulgarity of manners inseparable from decaying feudalism shall have disappeared, when equality shall be rightly apprehended and refinement be the common mark of humble and wealthy homes—should this golden age of a grander civilisation dawn upon the nations, then Wordsworth will be recognised as the prophet and apostle of the world's rejuvenescence. He, too, has something to give, a quiet dignity, a nobleness and loftiness of feeling joined to primitive simplicity, the tranquillity of self-respect, the calm of self-assured uprightness, which it would be very desirable for the advocates of fraternity and equality to assimilate. Of science and democracy Wordsworth in his lifetime was suspicious. It is almost a paradox to proclaim him the poet of democracy and science. Yet there is that in his work which renders it congenial to the mood of men powerfully influenced by scientific ideas, and

expecting from democracy the regeneration of society at no incalculably distant future.

After all, Wordsworth is essentially an English poet. He has the limitations no less than the noble qualities of the English character powerfully impressed upon him. Shelley brought into English literature a new ideality, a new element of freedom and expansion. Mazzini greeted Byron with enthusiastic panegyric as the poet of emancipation. Wordsworth moves in a very different region from that of either Byron or Shelley. He remains a stiff, consistent, immitigable Englishman; and it may be questioned whether his stubborn English temperament, his tough insular and local personality, no less than a certain homeliness in his expression, may not prove an obstacle to his acceptance as a cosmopolitan poet. I find a curious note on British literature in the "Democratic Vistas" of Walt Whitman, a portion of which, though it is long, may here be not unprofitably cited:

I add that, while England is among the greatest of lands in political freedom, or the idea of it, and in stalwart personal character, etc., the spirit of English literature is not great—at least, is not greatest—and its products are no models for us. With the exception of Shakespeare, there is no first-class genius, or approaching to first-class, in that literature which, with a truly vast amount of value and of artificial beauty (largely from the classics), is almost always material, sensual, not spiritual—almost always congests, makes plethoric, not frees, expands,

dilates—is cold, anti-democratic, loves to be sluggish and stately, and shows much of that characteristic of vulgar persons, the dread of saying or doing something not at all improper in itself, but unconventional, and that may be laughed at. In its best, the sombre pervades it—it is moody, melancholy, and to give it its due, expresses in characters and plots these qualities in an unrivalled manner. Yet not as the black thunder-storms, and in great normal, crashing passions, as of the Greek dramatists—clearing the air, refreshing afterward, bracing with power; but as in *Hamlet*, moping, sick, uncertain, and leaving ever after a secret taste for the blues, the morbid fascination, the luxury of woe.

This is a severe verdict to be spoken by one whose main interest in life appears to be the building up of American personality by means of great literature. To the Americans, destined to be by far the most numerous of "the English-speaking public," our poetry cannot remain a matter of indifference, nor can their criticism of it be passed over by us with neglect. They are in the unique position of possessing our language as their mother-tongue, and at the same time of contemplating our literature from a point of view that is the opposite of insular. Comparing English poetry with the spirit of the American people, whom he knows undoubtedly far better than the refined students of Boston, Walt Whitman comes to the conclusion that there is but little in it that will suit their needs or help them forward on the path of their development. Yet I cannot but think that, had he read Wordsworth, he would have made at least

a qualified exception in his favour.* Wordsworth is not "sombre, moody, melancholy," is certainly not afraid of the "unconventional," does not borrow "artificial beauty" from the classics or elsewhere. In fact, the faults here found with English poetry in general are contradicted in an eminent degree by his best poetry. But, though this seems clear enough, it remains true that in Wordsworth we find a ponderosity, a personal and patriotic egoism, a pompousness, a self-importance in dwelling upon details that have value chiefly for the poet himself or for the neighbourhood he lives in, which may not unnaturally appear impertinent or irksome to readers of a different nationality. Will the essential greatness of Wordsworth, whereof so much has been already said, his humanity, his wisdom, his healthiness, his bracing tone, his adequacy to the finer inner spirit of a scientific and democratic age—will these solid and imperishable qualities overcome the occasionally defective utterance, the want of humour and lightness, the obstinate insularity of character, the somewhat repellent intensity of local interest, which cannot but be found in him?

* This I gather from the modification of the above passage in favour of "the cheerful" name of Walter Scott.

IS MUSIC THE TYPE OR MEASURE OF ALL ART?

Mr. Matthew Arnold's definition of Poetry as "at bottom a Criticism of Life," insisted somewhat too strenuously on the purely intellectual and moral aspects of art. There is a widely different way of regarding the same subject-matter, which finds acceptance with many able thinkers of the present time. This ignores the criticism of life altogether, and dwells with emphasis upon sensuous presentation, emotional suggestion, and technical perfection, as the central and essential qualities of art. In order to steer a safe course between the Scylla of excessive intellectuality, and the Charybdis of excessive sensuousness, it will be well to examine what a delicate and philosophical critic has published on this second theory of the arts. With this object in view, I choose a paper by Mr. Walter Pater on "The School of Giorgione."* The

* *Fortnightly Review*, October, 1837.

opinion that art has a sphere independent of intellectual or ethical intention is here advocated with lucidity, singular charm of style, and characteristic reserve.

Mr. Pater opens the discussion by very justly condemning the tendency of popular critics "to regard all products of art as various forms of poetry." "For this criticism," he says, "poetry, music, and painting are but translations into different languages of one and the same fixed quantity of imaginative thought, supplemented by certain technical qualities of colour in painting, of sound in music, of rhythmical words in poetry." "In this way," he adds, "the sensuous element in art, and with it almost everything in art that is essentially artistic, is made a matter of indifference." He then proceeds to point out that each of the fine arts has its own sphere, its own untranslatable mode of expression, its own way of reaching the imaginative reason through the senses, its own special responsibilities to its material.

So far, every intelligent student of the subject will agree with him. Nor will there be any substantial difference of opinion as to the second point on which he insists—namely, that each of the arts, while pursuing its own object, and obeying its own laws, may sometimes assimilate the

quality of a sister-art. This, adopting German phraseology, Mr. Pater terms the *Anders-streben* of an art, or the reaching forward from its own sphere into the sphere of another art. We are familiar with the thought that Greek dramatic poetry borrowed something of its form from sculpture, and that the Italian romantic epic was determined to a great extent by the analogy of painting. Nor is it by any means an innovation in criticism to refer all the artistic products of a nation to some dominant fine art, for which that nation possessed a special aptitude, and which consequently gave colour and complexion to its whole æsthetical activity. Accordingly, Mr. Pater, both in the doctrine of the independence of each art, and also in the doctrine of the *Anders-streben* of one art toward another, advances nothing which excites opposition.

At this point, however, he passes into a region of more questionable speculation. Having rebuked popular criticism for using poetry as the standard whereby to judge the arts, he proceeds to make a similar use of music; for he lays it down that all the arts in common aspire "towards the principle of music, music being the typical, or ideally consummate art, the object of the great *Anders-streben* of all art, of all that is artistic, or partakes of artistic qualities."

The reason for this assertion is stated with precision: *

All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music. For while in all other works of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it. That the mere matter of a poem, for instance, its subject, its given incidents or situation; that the mere matter of a picture, the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape, should be nothing without the form, the spirit of the handling; that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter; this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.

Having illustrated the meaning of this paragraph by references to painting, poetry, furniture, dress, and the details of daily intercourse, Mr. Pater proceeds as follows: †

Art, then, is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material; the ideal examples of poetry and painting being those in which the constituent elements of the composition are so welded together that the material or subject no longer strikes the intellect only; nor the form, the eye or ear only; but form and matter, in their union or identity, present one single effect to the imaginative reason, that complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born with its sensible analogue or symbol.

* *Fortnightly Review*, p. 528. The italics are Mr. Pater's.

† Ibid. p. 530.

It is the art of music which most completely realises this artistic ideal, this perfect identification of form and matter, this strange chemistry, uniting, in the integrity of pure light, contrasted elements. In its ideal, consummate moments, the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other; and to it, therefore, to the condition of its perfect moments, all the arts may be supposed constantly to tend and aspire. Music, then, not poetry, as is so often supposed, is the true type or measure of consummate art. Therefore, although each art has its incommunicable element, its untranslatable order of impressions, its unique mode of reaching the imaginative reason, yet the arts may be represented as continually struggling after the law or principle of music, to a condition which music alone completely realises; and one of the chief functions of æsthetic criticism, dealing with the concrete products of art, new or old, is to estimate the degree in which each of those products approaches in this sense to musical law.

If this means that art, as art, aspires toward a complete absorption of the matter into the form—toward such a blending of the animative thought or emotion with the embodying vehicle that the shape produced shall be the only right and perfect manifestation of a spiritual content to the senses, so that, while we contemplate the work, we cannot conceive their separation—then in this view there is nothing either new or perilous. It was precisely this which constituted the consummate excellence of Greek sculpture. The sculptor found so apt a shape for the expression of ideal personality, that his marble became an

apocalypse of godhood. It was precisely this, again, which made the poetry of Virgil artistically perfect. In the words of the most eloquent of Virgil's panegyrists: "What is meant by the vague praise bestowed on Virgil's unequalled style is practically this, that he has been, perhaps, more successful than any other poet in fusing together the expressed and the suggested emotion; that he has discovered the hidden music which can give to every shade of feeling its distinction, its permanence, and its charm; that his thoughts seem to come to us on wings of melodies prepared for them from the foundation of the world."*

But it does not seem that Mr. Pater means this only. We have the right to conclude from passages which may be emphasized, that he has in view the more questionable notion that the fine arts in their most consummate moments all aspire toward vagueness of intellectual intention — that a well-defined subject in poetry and painting and sculpture is a hindrance to artistic quality—that the delight of the eye or of the ear is of more moment than the thought of the brain. Art, he says, is "always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its

* Essays, Classical, by F. W. H. Myers, p. 115.

subject or material." "Lyrical poetry," he says, "just because in it you are least able to detach the matter from the form without a deduction of something from that matter itself, is, at least artistically, the highest and most complete form of poetry. And the very perfection of such poetry often seems to depend in part *on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the definite meaning almost expires*, or reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding."*

This is ingenious; and it cannot be denied that the theory has a plausible appearance. Yet, were we to carry Mr. Pater's principles to their logical extremity, we should have to prefer Pope's "Verses by a Person of Quality" to the peroration of the "Dunciad," and a noble specimen of Japanese screen-painting to Turner's Téméraire or Raphael's School of Athens.

So far as the art of poetry goes, he seems to overstate a truth, which is finely and exactly expressed by Mr. Myers in the essay on Virgil from which I have already quoted. The passage is long; but it puts so well the point which Mr. Pater has perhaps exaggerated, regarding the importance of the sensuous and suggestive elements

* *Fortnightly Review*, p. 529. Here the italics are not Mr. Pater's, but mine.

in poetry, that I venture to think my readers will be glad to be reminded of it:*

The range of human thoughts and emotions greatly transcends the range of such symbols as man has invented to express them; and it becomes, therefore, the business of Art to use these symbols in a double way. They must be used for the direct representation of thought and feeling; but they must also be combined by so subtle an imagination as to suggest much which there is no means of directly expressing. And this can be done; for experience shows that it is possible so to arrange forms, colours, and sounds as to stimulate the imagination in a new and inexplicable way. This power makes the painter's art an imaginative as well as an imitative one; and gives birth to the art of the musician, whose symbols are hardly imitative at all, but express emotions which, till music suggests them, have been not only unknown but unimaginable. Poetry is both an imitative and an imaginative art. As a choice and condensed form of emotional speech, it possesses the reality which depends on its directly recalling our previous thoughts and feelings. But as a system of rhythmical and melodious effects—not indebted for their potency to their associated ideas alone—it appeals also to that mysterious power by which mere arrangements of sound can convey an emotion which no one could have predicted beforehand, and which no known laws can explain.

And, indeed, in poetry of the first order, almost every word (to use a mathematical metaphor) is raised to a higher power. It continues to be an articulate sound and a logical step in the argument; but it becomes also a musical sound and a centre of emotional force. It becomes a musical sound —that is to say, its consonants and vowels are arranged to bear a relation to the consonants and vowels near it—a relation of which accent, quantity, rhyme, assonance, and allitera-

* Essays, Classical, pp. 113–115.

tion are specialised forms, but which may be of a character more subtle than any of these. And it becomes a centre of emotional force; that is to say, the complex associations which it evokes modify the associations evoked by other words in the same passage in a way quite distinct from grammatical or logical connection. The poet, therefore, must avoid two opposite dangers. If he thinks too exclusively of the music and the colouring of his verses—of the imaginative means of suggesting thought and feeling—what he writes will lack reality and sense. But if he cares only to communicate definite thought and feeling according to the ordinary laws of eloquent speech, his verse is likely to be deficient in magical and suggestive power.

This is right. This makes equitable allowance for the claims alike of the material and the form of art—the intellectual and emotional content, the sensuous and artificial embodiment.

But to return to Mr. Pater. His doctrine that art is "always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence," his assertion that the perfection of lyrical poetry "often seems to depend in part on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject," contradict the utterances of the greatest craftsmen in the several arts — Milton's sublime passages on the function of Poetry; Sidney's and Shelley's Defences of Poesy; Goethe's doctrine of "the motive;" Rossetti's canon that "fundamental brain-work" is the characteristic of all great art; Michel Angelo's and Beethoven's observations upon their own employment of sculpture and music. Rigidly applied, his principles would tend to with-

draw art from the sphere of spirituality altogether Yet, considered as paradoxes, they have real value, inasmuch as they recall attention to the sensuous side of art, and direct the mind from such antagonistic paradoxes as the one propounded by Mr. Matthew Arnold in his preface to Wordsworth.

It is difficult to see in what way Mr. Pater can evade the strictures he has passed upon his brethren, the popular critics. Whether a man selects poetry or selects music as the "true type or measure of consummate art," to which "in common all the arts aspire," will depend doubtless partly upon personal susceptibilities, and partly upon the theory he has formed of art in general. Both the popular critics and Mr. Pater take up their position upon equally debatable ground. The case stands thus. Mr. Pater is of opinion that the best poetry is that in which there is the least appeal to "mere intelligence," in which the verbal melody and the suggestive way of handling it are more important than the intellectual content. He thinks that the best pictures are those in which the "mere subject" is brought into the least prominence. Holding these views, he selects music as the "true type and measure of consummate art." Herein he is consistent; for music, by reason of its limitations, is the least adapted of all arts for the expression of an intellectual content. The popular critic, on the other hand, is of opinion that the best poetry

is that which has the clearest, the most human, and the most impressive motive. He thinks that the best pictures are those which, beside being delightful by their drawing and colour, give food for meditation and appeal to mental faculty. Holding these views, he selects poetry as the "true type and measure of consummate art." Herein he too is consistent; for poetry, by reason of its limitations, is the best adapted of all arts for appealing to intelligence and embodying motives with lucidity.

Mr. Pater and the popular critic are equally right or equally wrong. We are, in fact, confronting two different conceptions of art, each of which is partial and one-sided, because the one insists too strongly on the sensuous form, the other on the mental stuff, of art.

Suppose a man does not accept Mr. Pater's doctrine; supposing he starts from another point of view, and demands some defined conception in a work of art as well as a sensuous appeal to our imaginative reason; supposing he regards art in its highest manifestation as a mode of utterance for what is spiritual in man, as a language for communicating the ideal world of thought and feeling in sensible form; then he will be tempted to select not music but poetry as his type and measure. Thus it is manifest that critics who refer to the standard of poetry, and critics who refer to the standard of music, differ in this mainly

that they hold divergent theories regarding the function of art in general.

The debatable point for consideration is whether either the popular critic rebuked by Mr. Pater or Mr. Pater himself can legitimately choose one of the arts as the "type and measure" for the rest. I maintain that both are expressing certain personal predilections, whereby the abiding relations of the arts run some risk of being overlooked. What the matter really comes to is this: while the one proclaims his preference for sensuous results, the other proclaims a preference for defined intelligible content. Each does violence by his selection to one or other of the arts. The critic who demands a meaning at any cost, will find it hard to account for his appreciation of music or of architecture. Mr. Pater, in order to complete his theory, is forced to depreciate the most sublime and powerful masterpieces of poetry. In his view drama and epic doff their caps before a song, in which verbal melody and the communication of a mood usurp upon invention, passion, cerebration, definite meaning.

Just as the subjectivity of any age or nation erects one art into the measure of the rest, so the subjectivity of a particular critic will induce him to choose poetry or music, or it may be sculpture, as his standard. The fact remains that each art possesses its own strength and its own weakness,

and that no one of the arts, singly and by itself, achieves the whole purpose of art. That purpose is to express the content of human thought and feeling in sensuously beautiful form by means of various vehicles, imposing various restrictions, and implying various methods of employment. If we seek the maximum of intelligibility, we find it in poetry; but at the same time we have here the minimum of immediate effect upon the senses. If we seek the maximum of sensuous effect, we find it in music; but at the same time we have here the minimum of appeal to intelligence. Architecture, in its inability to express definite ideas, stands next to music; but its sensuous influence upon the mind is feebler. As a compensation, it possesses the privilege of permanence, of solidity, of impressive magnitude, of undefinable but wonder-waking symbolism. Sculpture owes its power to the complete and concrete presentation of human form, to the perfect incarnation of ideas in substantial shapes of bronze or stone, on which light and shadows from the skies can fall: this it alone of all the arts displays. It has affinities with architecture on the one hand, owing to the material it uses, and to poetry on the other, owing to the intelligibility of its motives. Painting is remote from architecture; but it holds a place where sculpture, poetry, and music let their powers be felt. Though dependent on design, it can tell a

story better than sculpture; and in this repect painting more nearly approaches poetry. It can communicate a mood without relying upon definite or strictly intelligible motives; in this respect it borders upon music. Of all the arts, painting is the most flexible, the most mimetic, the most illusory. It cannot satisfy our understanding like poetry; it cannot flood our souls with the same noble sensuous joy as music; it cannot present such perfect and full shapes as sculpture; it cannot affect us with the sense of stability or with the mysterious suggestions which belong to architecture. But it partakes of all the other arts through its speciality of surface-delineation, and adds its own delightful gift of colour, second in sensuous potency only to sound.

Such is the prism of the arts; each distinct, but homogeneous, and tinctured at their edges with hues borrowed from the sister-arts. Their differences derive from the several vehicles they are bound to employ. Their unity is the spiritual substance which they express in common. Abstract beauty, the *ἰδέα τοῦ καλοῦ*, is one and indivisible. But the concrete shapes which manifest this beauty, decompose it, just as the prism analyses white light into colours. "Multæ terricolis linguæ cœlestibus una."

It is by virtue of this separateness and by virtue of these sympathies that we are justified in calling

the poetry of Sophocles or Landor, the painting of Michel Angelo or Mantegna, the music of Gluck or Cherubini, sculpturesque; Lorenzetti's frescoes and Dante's "Paradiso," architectural; Tintoretto's Crucifixion and the Genius of the Vatican, poetical; Shelley's lyrics in *Prometheus Unbound* and Titian's Three Ages, musical; the façade of the Certosa at Pavia, pictorial; and so forth, as suggestion and association lead us.

But let it be remembered that this discrimination of an *Anders-streben* in the arts, is after all but fanciful. It is at best a way of expressing our sense of something subjective in the styles of artists or of epochs, not of something in the arts themselves. Let it be still more deeply remembered that if we fix upon any one art as the type and measure for the rest, we are either indulging a personal partiality, or else uttering an arbitrary, and therefore inconclusive, æsthetical hypothesis. The main fact to bear steadily in mind is that beauty is the sensuous manifestation of the idea—that is, of the spiritual element in man and in the world—and that the arts, each in its own way, conveys this beauty to our percipient self. We have to abstain on the one hand from any theory which emphasizes the didactic function of art, and on the other from any theory, however plausible, which diverts attention from the one cardinal truth: namely, that fine and liberal art,

as distinguished from mechanical art or the arts of the kitchen and millinery, exists for the embodiment of thought and emotion in forms of various delightfulness, appealing to what has been called the imaginative reason, that complex faculty which is neither mere understanding nor mere sense, by means of divers sensuous suggestions, and several modes of concrete presentation.

THE PATHOS OF THE ROSE IN POETRY.

SOME five years ago there appeared a little volume, named "Ros Rosarum ex Horto Poetarum," and bearing upon its title-page the well-known initials of E. V. B., under which the Hon. Mrs. Richard Cavendish Boyle has given several works of combined literary and artistic merit to the world. This volume is an anthology culled from the poetry of all languages and ages upon the theme of the rose. To make such a collection at once complete would have been almost impossible; and a book not quite complete, like Mrs. Boyle's "Ros Rosarum," has the advantage of suggestiveness and stimulation to the fancy of the reader, which an exhaustive anthology of rose-literature would have failed to convey.

Studying its pages with close attention, I observed that Mrs. Boyle had omitted two important passages in Latin poetry which may be regarded as the twin fountain-heads of a large amount of verses written upon roses in the modern

world. On turning to Catullus and Ausonius and comparing the passages in question with some stanzas by Poliziano, Ariosto, Tasso, Guarini, Spenser, Herrick, Waller, Ronsard, and other modern poets, I was so much struck with the examples of literary derivation they afforded, that I composed the following essay, which I now present as an attempt to study the forms of hybridism in poetry.

The first of the two passages in question occurs in the second Epithalamium of Catullus:

> Ut flos in sæptis secretus nascitur hortis,
> Ignotus pecori, nullo contusus aratro,
> Quem mulcent auræ, firmat sol, educat imber;
> Multi illum pueri, multæ optavere puellæ:
> Idem quùm tenui carptus defloruit ungui,
> Nulli illum pueri, nullæ optavere puellæ:
> Sic virgo dum intacta manet, dum cara suis est,
> Quom castum amisit polluto corpore florem,
> Nec pueris jocunda manet, nec cara puellis.

It will be noticed that Catullus does not specialise the rose. He speaks indifferently of a flower. But when we examine the imitations of these lines by modern poets, we shall see how their instinct appropriated to the rose the honours of the suggestion. I may also point out that the poet dwells only on the fact that a flower, up-growing on its native stalk, nourished into bloom by the

powers of nature, is desirable to all who gaze upon it; but when it has been plucked, the cut flower raises no desire; and so, Catullus says, it is with maidens also.

For English readers I will roughly paraphrase these untranslateable hexameters:

> The flower that, closed by garden walls, doth blow,
> Which no plough wounds, and no rude cattle know,
> But breezes fan, sun fosters, showers shoot higher,
> It many lads and many maids desire;
> The same, when cropped by cruel hand it fades,
> No lads at all desire it, nor no maids:
> E'en so the girl, so long her youth doth last
> Untouched, on her kind friends affection cast;
> But when she stoops to folly, sheds her bloom,
> For lads, for maids, hath flown her chaste perfume.

The second of the two classic passages to which I have referred is an Idyll by Ausonius. This poet, who lived from 309 to 392 A.D., was half pagan and half Christian. His genius floated in the atmosphere of the decaying Roman Empire, between influences of the past and future. But what his religious creed was does not greatly signify. As a writer, he expressed, at the latest close of antique culture, something of the spirit which appears in mediæval, and which pervades modern literature, the spirit of sympathy with nature, and the sense of pathos in ephemeral

things. It was Ausonius, then, who wrote the following Idyll on the Rose:

Ver erat et blando mordentia frigora sensu
 Spirabat croceo mane revecta dies.
Strictior Eoos præcesserat aura jugales,
 Æstiferum suadens anticipare diem.
Errabam riguis per quadrua compita in hortis,
 Maturo cupiens me vegetare die.
Vidi concretas per gramina flexa pruinas
 Pendere, aut olerum stare cacuminibus;
Caulibus et patulis teretes colludere guttas,
 Et cœlestis aquæ pondere tunc gravidas.
Vidi Pæstano candere rosaria cultu,
 Exoriente novo roscida Lucifero.
Rara pruinosis canebat gemma frutetis,
 Ad primi radios interitura die.
Ambigeres, raperetve rosis Aurora ruborem,
 An daret, et flores tingeret orta dies.
Ros unus, color unus, et unum mane duorum,
 Sideris et floris nam domina una Venus.
Forsan et unus odor: sed celsior ille per auras
 Difflatur, spirat proximus ille magis.
Communis Paphiæ dea sideris et dea floris
 Præcipit unius muricis esse habitum.
Momentum intererat, quo se nascentia florum
 Germina comparibus dividerent spatiis.
Hæc viret angusto foliorum tecta galero
 Hæc tenui folio purpura rubra notat.
Hæc aperit primi fastigia celsa obelisci,
 Mucronem absolvens purpurei capitis.
Vertice collectos illa exsinuabat amictus,
 Jam meditans foliis se numerare suis:
Nec mora, ridentis calathi patefecit honorem,
 Prodens inclusi semina densa croci.

Hæc modo, quæ toto rutilaverat igne comarum,
Pallida collapsis deseritur foliis.
Mirabar celerem fugitiva ætate rapinam,
Et, dum nascuntur, consenuisse rosas.
Ecce, et defluxit rutili coma punica floris,
Dum loquor, et tellus tecta rubore micat.
Tot species tantosque ortus variosque novatus
Una dies aperit, conficit una dies.
Conquerimur Natura, brevis quod gratia florum est?
Ostentata oculis illico dona rapis.
Quam longa una dies, ætas tam longa rosarum,
Quas pubescentes juncta senecta premit.
Quam modo nascentem rutilus conspexit Eous,
Hanc rediens sero vespere vidit anum.
Sed bene, quod paucis licet interitura diebus,
Succedens ævum prorogat ipsa suum.
Collige, virgo, rosas, dum flos novus et nova pubes,
Et memor esto ævum sic properare tuum.

In the course of our analysis we shall see what parts of this Idyll were selected for imitation by modern poets, and what parts they omitted. The beautiful imaginative lines (12–22) in which the morning star and the rose are brought beneath the common guardianship of Venus, have, so far as I know, not been seized upon; although one thought contained in them, that possibly the star may be no less fragrant than the flower, is very modern in its fancy. But first it will be well to call attention to the fact that, while Catullus used the flower of his metaphor only as a symbol of virginity, Ausonius enters into communion with the rose

herself as a living creature. For him the flower is no mere emblem. The reflections upon human life which it suggests are only brought forward at the conclusion of his poem, which, in its main structure, is a studied picture of external objects lovingly observed. Another point should be noticed. His sympathy with the short bloom-time of the rose makes him draw from nature pathos which he afterwards applies to man. Hitherto, in classic literature, the rose had been a symbol of love and gladness, celebrated as the ornament of Aphrodite, the pledge of passion, and the chief decoration of life's banquet. In all the authors who praised the rose, from Sappho to the false Anacreon and Philostratus, I remember none who dwelt with insistance on its brevity of beauty. Writing even of dead roses, the anonymous poet of the Anacreontics thinks of their perfume.

χαρίεν ῥόδων δὲ γῆρας
νεότητος ἔσχεν ὀζμήν.

It remained for Ausonius, in the crepuscular interspace between the sunset of the antique and the night which came before the sunrise of the modern age, to develop thus elaborately the motive of fragility in rose life and in human loveliness. For English readers I have made a translation of his idyll, which may enable them "as in a glass darkly" to perceive its subdued lustre.

'Twas spring, and dawn returning breathed new-born
From saffron skies the bracing chill of morn.
Before day's orient chargers went a breeze,
That whispered: Rise, the sweets of morning seize!
In watered gardens where the cross-paths ran,
Freshness and health I sought ere noon began:
I watched from bending grasses how the rime
In clusters hung, or gemmed the beds of thyme;
How the round beads, on herb and leaf outspread,
Rolled with the weight of dews from heaven's height shed;
Saw the rose-gardens in their Pestan bloom
Hoar 'neath the dawn-star rising through the gloom.
On every bush those separate splendours gleam,
Doomed to be quenched by day's first arrowy beam.
Here might one doubt: doth morn from roses steal
Their redness, or the rose with dawn anneal?
One hue, one dew, one morn makes both serene;
Of star and flower one Venus reigns the queen.
Perchance one scent have they; the star's o'erhead
Far, far exhales, the flower's at hand is shed.
Goddess of star, goddess of rose no less,
The Paphian flings o'er both her crimson dress.
Now had the moment passed wherein the brood
Of clustering buds seemed one twin sisterhood.
This flower, enlaced with leaves, shows naught but green;
That shoots a roseate streak from forth the screen:
One opes her pyramid and purple spire,
Emerging into plenitude of fire:
Another thrusts her verdant veil aside,
Counting her petals one by one with pride:
Expands her radiant cup of gorgeous hue,
And brings dense hidden veins of gold to view:
She who had burned erewhile, a flower of flame,
Now pales and droops her fainting head with shame:—
So that I mused how swift time steals all worth,
How roses age and wither with their birth;

Yea, while I speak, the flower with crimson crowned
Hath fallen and shed her glories on the ground.
So many births, forms, fates with changes fraught,
One day begins and one day brings to naught!
Grieve we that flowers should have so short a grace,
That Nature shows and steals her gifts apace?
Long as the day, so long the red rose lasts;
Eld following close on youth her beauty blasts:
That flower which Phosphor newly-born had known,
Hesper returning finds a wrinkled crone:
Yet well if, though some brief days past she die,
Her life be lengthened through posterity!
Pluck roses, girl, when flower, when youth is new,
Mindful the while that thus time flies for you.

These, then, are the two Latin sources which I wish to bring before the students of rose-literature in modern poetry. One of them is a passage from a marriage song by Catullus, the other an Idyll by Ausonius. I have next to show how, after the revival of letters, they were severally or in combination used by European poets. In this part of my task I shall not seek after exhaustiveness, but shall content myself with such specimens as occur readily to the memory.

I said that the Greek and Latin poets of a good period rarely used the rose as a symbol of human fragility. This requires some modification. The myths connected with flowers—hyacinth, narcissus, anemone—are themselves suggestive of sadness; but in these a god's beloved has become a plant

which blooms each year with the recurring season. Therefore, this contemplation of the flower derives its sentiment rather from the promise of continuity and immortality in nature, than from the pathos of temporal decay. The rose, it may be parenthetically observed, in one version of the death of Adonis, was said to have sprung from his blood, the anemone from Aphrodite's tears.*

δάκρυα δ'ἀ Παφίη, τόσσ' ἐκχέει, ὅσσον Ἄδωνις
αἷμα χέει· τὰ δὲ πάντα ποτὶ χθονὶ γίγνεται ἄνθη.
αἷμα ῥόδον τίκτει, τὰ δὲ δάκρυα τὰν ἀνεμώναν.

Tears the Paphian shed, drop by drop for the drops of Adonis'
Blood, and on earth each drop, as it fell, grew into a blossom;
Roses sprang from the blood, and the tears gave birth to the wind-flower.

Those beautiful similes, again, in which Homer and Virgil likened a young man stricken by death upon the battle-field to a poppy, or hyacinth, or olive broken from its stem, were symbols, not of the short prime of beauty, but of its sudden and unseasonable extinction; nor was the rose, so far as I remember, employed even in this way. That was reserved for a modern poet, Ariosto, who

* Bion's "Lament for Adonis," 64–66. The lines are probably a late interpolation.

compared the mouth of dying Zerbino to a waning rose.*

Languidetta come rosa,
Rosa non colta in sua stagione, sì ch' ella
Impallidisca in su la siepe ombrosa.

Languid like a rose,
A rose not plucked in her due season, so
That she must fade upon the dim hedgerows.

Yet two passages may be noticed in which poets of a good age compared the rose in her brief season to the fleeting loveliness of youth.†

καὶ τὸ ῥόδον καλόν ἐστι, καὶ ὁ χρόνος αὐτὸ μαραίνει·
καὶ τὸ ἴον καλόν ἐστιν ἐν εἴαρι, καὶ ταχὺ γηρᾷ·
καὶ κάλλος καλόν ἐστι τὸ παιδικόν, ἀλλ' ὀλίγον ζῇ.

Fair is the rose, but time consumes her flower;
Fair the spring violet, but soon it fades;
And fair is boyish beauty, but short-lived.

Ovid, perhaps with these lines in his memory, wrote as follows:‡

Nec violæ semper, nec hiantia lilia florent;
Et viget amissa spina relicta rosa.
Et tibi jam cani venient, formose, capilli;
Jam venient rugæ quæ tibi corpus arent.

* "Orl. Fur.," xxiv., 80.

† Theocritus, Idyll xxiii. 29. This Idyll is probably not by Theocritus, but by an imitator.

‡ "Ars Amandi," ii., 115.

Not always violets nor lilies bloom;
The sharp thorn bristles in the rose's room.
And thus for thee, fair boy, shall gray hairs grow,
While envious time delves wrinkles on thy brow.

I might also quote an epigram of Rufinus to Rhodocleia, in which he bids her bind blossoms on her brow, reminding her the while that:

ἀνθεῖς καὶ λήγεις καὶ σὺ καὶ ὁ στέφανος.

For time fades thee as he fades the roses;
Nor they nor thou may revive again.

Such, before the date of Ausonius, were the slender contributions of classic poets to the pathos of rose-literature.

With the revival of letters in the fifteenth century the passages from Catullus and Ausonius which I have chosen as the themes for my discourse, fell like seeds on fertile soil in Italy, and bore abundant flowers of poetry, which spread their perfume, afterwards, through Europe. The melancholy which survived from mediævalism at that epoch, and the vivid interest in nature which characterised the Renaissance, combined to draw the attention of scholar-poets to the idyll of Ausonius. This idyll, or elegy, as it might better be called, reappears, but slightly altered, and with

some distinctive additions, in the "Corinto" of Lorenzo de' Medici:

L' altra mattina in un mio piccolo orto
Andavo: e 'l sol sorgente con suoi rai
Uscía, non già ch io lo vedessi scorto.
Sonvi piantati dentro alcuni rosai;
A quai rivolsi le mie vaghe ciglie
Per quel che visto non avevo mai.
Eranvi rose candide e vermiglie:
Alcuna a foglia a foglia al sol si spiega;
Stretta prima, poi par s' apra scompiglie;
Altra più giovinetta si dislega
Appena dalla boccia: cravi ancora
Chi le sue chiuse foglie all' aer niega;
Altra cadendo a piè il terreno infiora.
Cosi le vidi nascere e morire
E passar lor vaghezza in men d' un' ora.
Quando languenti e pallide vidi ire
Le foglie a terra, allor mi venne a mente
Che vana cosa è il giovenil fiorire.
Ogni arbore ha i suoi fiori: e immantinente
Poi le tenere frondi al sol si piegano
Quando rinnovellar l' aere si sente.
I piccol frutti ancor informi allegano;
Ch' a poco a poco talor tanto ingrossano,
Che pel gran peso i forti rami piegano,
Nè senza gran periglio portar possano
Il proprio peso; appena regger sogliono
Crescendo, ad or ad ora se l' addossono.
Vien poi l'autunno, e maturi si cogliono
I dolci pomi: e passato il bel tempo,
Di fior di frutti e fronde al fin si spogliono.
Cogli la rosa, o ninfa, or ch' è il bel tempo.

I will give my own English version of this piece :

Into a little close of mine I went
One morning, when the sun with his fresh light
Was rising all refulgent and unshent.
Rose-trees are planted there in order bright,
Whereto I turned charmed eyes, and long did stay,
Taking my fill of that new-found delight.
Red and white roses bloomed upon the spray;
One opened, leaf by leaf, to greet the morn,
Shyly at first, then in sweet disarray;
Another, yet a youngling, newly born,
Scarce struggled from the bud, and there were some
Whose petals closed them from the air forlorn;
Another fell, and showered the grass with bloom;
Thus I beheld the roses dawn and die,
And one short hour their loveliness consume.
But while I watched those languid petals lie
Colourless on cold earth, I could but think
How vain a thing is youthful bravery.
Trees have their time to bloom on winter's brink;
Then the rathe blossoms wither in an hour,
When the brief days of spring toward summer sink;
The fruit, as yet unformed, is tart and sour;
Little by little it grows large, and weighs
The strong boughs down with slow persistent power;
Nor without peril can the branches raise
Their burden; now they stagger 'neath the weight
Still growing, and are bent above the ways;
Soon autumn comes, and the ripe, ruddy freight
Is gathered: the glad season will not stay;
Flowers, fruit, and leaves are now all desolate.
Pluck the rose, therefore, maiden, while 'tis May!

Here we have the *Collige virgo rosas*, "Gather ye roses while ye may," translated from the autumn of antique to the April of modern poetry, and that note is echoed through all the love-literature of the Renaissance. Lorenzo, be it observed, has followed his model, not only in the close, but also in the opening of the passage. Side by side with this Florentine transcript from Ausonius I will now place Poliziano's looser, but more poetical handling of the same theme, subjoining my version of his ballata.

I' mi trovai, fanciulle, un bel mattino
Di mezzo maggio in un verde giardino.
Eran d' intorno violette e gigli
Fra l' erba verde, e vaghi fior novelli,
Azurri gialli candidi e vermigli:
Ond' io porsi la mano a cor di quelli
Per adornar e' mie' biondi capelli
E cinger di grillanda el vago crino.
I' mi trovai, etc.

Ma poi ch' i' ebbi pien di fiori un lembo,
Vidi le rose e non pur d' un colore:
Io corsi allor per empier tutto el grembo,
Perch' era si soave il loro odore
Che tutto mi senti' destar el core
Di dolce voglia e d' un piacer divino.
I' mi trovai, etc.

I' posi mente: quelle rose allora,
Mai non vi potre' dir quant' eran belle:
Quale scoppiava della boccia ancora;
Qual' erano un po' passe e qual novelle.

Amor mi disse allor :—Va' cô' di quelle
Che più vedi fiorite in sullo spino.
I' mi trovai, etc.

Quando la rosa ogni suo' foglia spande,
Quando è più bella, quando è più gradita ;
Allora è buona a mettere in ghirlande,
Prima che sua belleza sia fuggita :
Sicchè, fanciulle, mentre è più fiorita,
Cogliàn la bella rosa del giardino.
I' mi trovai, etc.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

Violets and lilies grew on every side
Mid the green grass, and young flowers wonderful,
Golden, and white, and red, and azure-eyed ;
Toward which I stretched my hands, eager to pull
Plenty to make my fair curls beautiful,
To crown my rippling curls with garlands gay.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

But when my lap was full of flowers I spied
Roses at last, roses of every hue ;
Therefore I ran to pluck their ruddy pride,
Because their perfume was so sweet and true
That all my soul went forth with pleasure new,
With yearning and desire too soft to say.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

I gazed and gazed. Hard task it were to tell
How lovely were the roses in that hour :
One was but peeping from her verdant shell,

And some were faded, some were scarce in flower.
Then Love said: Go, pluck from the blooming bower
Those that thou seest ripe upon the spray.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

For when the full rose quits her tender sheath,
When she is sweetest and most fair to see,
Then is the time to place her in thy wreath,
Before her beauty and her freshness flee.
Gather ye therefore roses with great glee,
Sweet girls, or e'er their perfume pass away.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

Much might be written about the different styles in which Lorenzo de' Medici and Poliziano severally treated the theme suggested to them by Ausonius. Lorenzo is minute in detail, sober in reflection; Poliziano employs slighter touches with an airier grace and freer flight of fancy. The one produces a careful study from nature by the light of his classical model; the other sings a new song, soaring high above the beaten track of imitation. The description of the rose-garden, of the roses in their several degrees of expansion, and the concluding moral, have been all etherealised in the ballata. But space forbids me to enter into further critical particulars.

Before quitting Poliziano, I will collect a few passages from his poems which seem to be derived

from the same source of Latin inspiration. In his "Giostra" (lib. i., st. 78) he thus describes the rose:

> Ma vie più lieta più ridente e bella
> Ardisce aprire il seno al sol la rosa:
> Questa di verde gemma s' incappella:
> Quella si mostra allo sportel vezzosa;
> L' altra che 'n dolce foco ardea pur ora
> Languida cade e il bel pratello infiora.

This pretty little picture may be said to represent the three ages of the rose. Though I cannot do justice to the original, these verses may be accepted as a bad copy of a graceful miniature:

> Trembles the virgin violet in air,
> With downcast eyes that seem love's sight to shun;
> But far more glad, more smiling, and more fair,
> The rose expands her bosom to the sun;
> This bud in verdant wreaths her head doth bear;
> That opes her half-blown petals one by one;
> And she who erewhile flames of love displayed,
> Drooping declines, and strews with bloom the glade.

In the "Orfeo" he paraphrased the admonition of the last lines of the idyll thus:

> Digli, zampogna mia, come via fugge
> Cogli anni insieme la belleza snella;
> E digli come il tempo ne distrugge,
> Nè l' età persa mai si rinnovella:
> Digli che sappi usar suo' forma bella,
> Chè sempre mai non saran rose e viole.

Or, as follows in English:

Nay, tell her, pipe of mine, how swift doth flee
Beauty together with our years amain;
Tell her how time destroys all rarity,
Nor youth once lost can be renewed again;
Tell her to use the gifts that yet remain;
Roses and violets blossom not alway.

To this refrain of *Collige virgo rosas* he is for ever returning:

Deh, non insuperbir per tuo' belleza,
Dama; ch' un breve tempo te la fura.
Canuta tornerà la bionda treza
Che del bel viso adorna la figura.
Mentre che il fiore è nella sua vagheza,
Coglilo; che belleza poco dura.
Fresca è la rosa da mattina, e a sera
Ell' ha perduto suo' belleza altera.

Nay, be not overproud of thy great grace,
Lady! for brief time is thy thief and mine.
White will he turn those golden curls that lace
Thy forehead and thy cheeks so marble-fine.
Lo! while the flower still flourisheth apace,
Pluck it; for beauty but awhile doth shine.
Fair is the rose at dawn; but long ere night
Her freshness fades, her pride hath vanished quite.

Thus Florentine poets used the rose as a reminder to girls that they should enjoy their youth in season. The graver simile of Catullus was not to their purpose. It first makes its

entrance into Italian poetry in these stanzas of Ariosto, which are closely copied from the Latin : *

La verginella è simile alla rosa,
Ch' in bel giardin su la nativa spina
Mentre sola e sicura si riposa,
Nè gregge nè pastor se le avvicina ;
L' aura soave e l' alba rugiadosa,
L' acqua, la terra, al suo favor s' inchina :
Giovani vaghi e dame innamorate
Amano averne e seni e tempie ornate.

Ma non sí tosto dal materno stelo
Rimossa viene, dal suo ceppo verde,
Che quanto avea dagli uomini e dal cielo
Favor, grazia, e belleza, tutto perde.
La vergine che 'l fior, di che piú zelo
Che de' begli occhi e della vita aver dè,
Lascia altrui côrre, il pregio ch' avea innante
Perde nel cor di tutti gli altri amanti.

The translation made by Rose of the "Orlando Furioso" shall here be quoted :

The virgin has her image in the rose
Sheltered in garden on its native stock,
Which there in solitude and safe repose
Blooms, unapproached by shepherd or by flock.
For this earth teems, and freshening water flows,
And breeze and dewy dawn their sweets unlock :
With such the wistful youth his bosom dresses,
With such the enamoured damsel braids her tresses.

* "Orl. Fur.," i., 42, 43.

But wanton hands no sooner this displace
From the maternal stem, where it had grown,
Than all was withered; whatsoever grace
It found with man or heaven; bloom, beauty gone.
The damsel who should hold in higher place
Than light or life the flower which is her own,
Suffering the spoiler's hand to crop the prize,
Forfeits her worth in every other's eyes.

Thus far I have traced the separate working of the two themes in Lorenzo de' Medici's, Poliziano's, and Ariosto's poetry. Tasso, while expanding in the main the motive of Ausonius, borrows one touch from Catullus in the following famous passage of the "Gerusalemme Liberata:"*

Deh! mira, egli canto, spuntar la rosa
Dal verde suo modesta e verginella,
Che mezzo aperta ancora e mezzo ascosa
Quanto si mostra men tanto è più bella.
Ecco poi nudo il sen già baldanzosa
Dispiega; ecco poi langue e non par quella;
Quella non par, che desiata avanti.
Fu da mille donzelle e mille amanti.

Cosi trapassa al trapassar d' un giorno
Della vita mortale il fiore e il verde:
Nè perchè faccia indietro april ritorno,
Si rinfiora ella mai nè si rinverde.
Cogliam la rosa in sul mattino adorno
Di questo dì, che tosto il seren perde;
Cogliam d' amor la rosa; amiamo or quando
Esser si puote riamato amando.

* Canto xvi., 15.

A translation made by Thomas Bayley from these stanzas shall be given, instead of any other, because it has been chosen by Mrs. Boyle in her book: *

> Mark ye (he sings) in modest maiden guise
> The red rose peeping from her leafy nest;
> Half opening, now half closed, the jewel lies,
> More bright her beauty seems the more repress.
>
> But lo! with bosom bared, the vaunting flower
> Now droops, now dies, alas! how changed the while,
> From that sweet rose that wooed, in happier hour,
> The young man's homage and the maiden's smile.
>
> Thus, in the passing of a day, the flower,
> The freshness of man's little life is o'er,
> Though April skies return with sun and shower,
> The flower may bloom not, life return no more.
>
> Cull, then, the rose, for night is coming; haste
> While o'er its leaves the matin dew is poured;
> Cull, then, the rose of love while yet thou mayest
> Living be loved—adoring be adored.

Notwithstanding many pretty and ingenious turns, this version is obviously imperfect through not following the metre of the original. And Mrs. Boyle might have done well to use the two stanzas in which Fairfax availed himself of Spenser's splendid paraphrase. Those who are curious in subtle points of translation should consult a letter which appeared not long ago in the *Academy* upon the various

* "Ros Rosarum," p. 68.

renderings of Tasso's song. The writer of that letter put together with much skill one version, combining the best portions of all.

Before leaving Italy for the North, let us see how Guarini handled the rose bequeathed to him from Catullus and Ausonius by Lorenzo de' Medici, Poliziano, Ariosto, and Tasso. Amarilli, the heroine of the "Pastor Fido," has been betrothed, for high reasons of state, to Silvio, a young hunter, who has no mind for marriage; and her father is naturally anxious lest a long engagement in these circumstances should prove the ruin of her happiness. He uses this beautiful, but somewhat too artificial, expansion of the Catullian theme, combined with Ariosto's simile of Zerbino's death, for the expression of his uneasiness:

Come in vago giardin rosa gentile
Che nelle verdi sue tenere spoglie
Pure dianzi era rinchiusa,
E sotto l' ombra del notturno velo
Incolta e sconosciuta
Stava, posando in sul materno stelo;
Al subito apparir del primo raggio,
Che spunti in Oriente,
Si desta e si risente,
E scopre al sol, che la vagheggia e mira,
Il suo vermiglio ed odorato seno,
Dov' ape susurrando
Nei mattutini albori
Vola, suggendo i rugiadosi umori;

Ma s' allor non si coglie,
Sicchè del mezzodì senta le fiamme,
Cade al cader del sole
Sì scolorita in sulla siepe ombrosa,
Ch' appena si può dir: questa fu rosa.
Così la verginella,
Mentre cura materna
La custodisce e chiude,
Chiude anch' ella il suo petto
All' amoroso affetto;
Ma se lascivo sguardo
Di cupido amator vien che la miri,
E n' oda ella i sospiri,
Gli apre subito il core,
E nel tenero sen riceve amore:
E se vergogna il cela,
O temenza l' affrena,
La misera, tacendo,
Per soverchio desio tutto si strugge.
Così manca beltà se 'l foco dura,
E perdendo stagion perde ventura.

In the following translation I have attempted to render the effect of those partly-rhymed and carefully-rhythmed lyrics, which Italian poets used in their dramatic work, and which Milton adopted from them in his choruses of *Samson Agonistes*:

As on fair garden lawns a gentle rose,
Who, lapped in tender sheaths of budding green,
Erewhile was shut from view,
And 'neath the shadow of night's sheltering hem,
Uncultured and unknown,
Abode in peace on the maternal stem,
With the first sudden beams that spring

O'er the dim East and day reveal,
Starts into life, begins to feel,
And opens to the sun's admiring gaze
Her crimson bosom laden with perfume,
Where the deep humming bee,
Bathed in cool light of morn,
Goes sucking honey-dews of darkness born ;
But, if none pluck her then,
If she but feel the fiery shafts of noon,
Falls with the falling of the sun,
So all discoloured on the dim hedgerows
That one can scarcely say : "This was a rose !"
E'en thus the girl,
What time a mother's care
Wards her frail flower and guards,
Guards also her own breast
From love and love's unrest ;
But if the wanton gaze
Of amorous lover chance on her to turn,
If she but hear his sighs that yearn,
She opens out her heart
And to her tender bosom takes love in ;
Then should shame hide her smart,
Or fear her will restrain,
The child in speechless pain
Through too much longing must decline and part.
Thus beauty fades, if the fire burneth long ;
And time's delay doth work her grievous wrong.

The extreme subtlety and rhetorical minuteness with which this image is wrought somewhat impair its pictorial power. But we must remember that this effect was calculated for an audience sensitive to the cadences of rhythmical declamation in the age which had invented modern music. For them

"the linkèd sweetness long drawn out" of Guarini's verbal melody had a peculiar charm. In order to show how poets can employ similar natural suggestions to point opposite lessons, let us set Guarini's "all discoloured" rose beside Shakespeare's

> Pale primroses,
> That die unmarried ere they can behold
> Bright Phœbus in his strength, a malady
> Most incident to maids.

Finally, notice how Shakespeare puts the central thought of Guarini, when he chooses, into a single phrase:

> She never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek.

Here the word damask brings the rose before us, as a little earlier in *Twelfth Night* the Duke gives the old analogy between the rose and woman's beauty in a couplet:

> For women are as roses, whose fair flower,
> Being once displayed, doth fall that very hour.

It is now time to trace the influence of the Catullian and Ausonian motives over English and French poetry. Spenser's magnificent paraphrase from Tasso follows the original closely, but omits,

whether intentionally or not, to dwell upon the line derived through Ariosto from Catullus.*

> The whiles some one did chaunt this lovely lay:
> Ah! see, whoso fair thing dost fain to see,
> In springing flower the image of the day.
> Ah! see the Virgin Rose, how sweetly she
> Doth first peep forth with bashful modesty,
> That fairer seems the less ye see her may.
> Lo, see soon after how more bold and free
> Her barèd bosom she doth broad display;
> Lo, see soon after how she fades and falls away.
>
> So passeth, in the passing of a day,
> Of mortal life the leaf, the bud, the flower;
> Ne more doth flourish after first decay,
> That erst was sought to deck both bed and bower
> Of many a lady and many a paramour.
> Gather therefore the rose whilst yet in prime,
> For soon comes age that will her pride deflower:
> Gather the rose of love whilst yet is time,
> Whilst loving thou mayst lovèd be with equal crime.

It so happens that none of the pieces which I have hitherto presented in this essay, with the exception of Tasso's stanzas and Bayley's version of them, occur in Mrs. Boyle's book. This does not prove the poverty of her anthology, but the extraordinary richness of rose-literature. In tracing the influence of Ausonius and Catullus upon modern poetry, I shall, from this point forward, be able to

* "Faery Queen," ii., xii., 74, 75.

refer to the pages of "Ros Rosarum." Ronsard's sonnet, "Comme on voit sur la branche," is interesting, as a somewhat faithful study from Catullus; but the maiden rose for whom he wrote it, had been cropped by death, not by dishonour.* His more celebrated lyric, "Mignonne, allez voir si la rose," which has been so elegantly translated by Mr. Andrew Lang, refines upon the motive of Ausonius.† Here, in the French "Cueillez, cueillez votre jeunesse," we recognise the Latin *Collige virgo rosam*. In another sonnet Ronsard renders the leading theme of the same idyll thus:‡

Un soleil voit naître et mourir la Rose.

When we turn to English poetry, we find in Samuel Daniel's sonnet, "Look, Delia," a pretty close rendering of Tasso's stanzas.§ William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, applied the metaphor of the rose to the waning of human life, without any particular reference to youthful beauty.‖ But the dominant note sounds again in Herrick's incomparable "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," and in Waller's graceful "Go, lovely Rose."¶ For a final touch I will transcribe a little fragment of

* "Ros Rosarum," p. 78.
† Ibid., p. 79.
‡ Ibid., p. 80.
§ Ibid., p. 119.
‖ Ibid., p. 138.
¶ Ibid., pp. 147, 150.

Herrick's. It occurs in a poem which was borrowed straight from the lines of Theocritus quoted above (p. 206):*

> This to your coyness I will tell;
> And having spoke it once, farewell.
> The lily will not long endure,
> Nor the snow continue pure;
> The rose, the violet, one day
> Sees both these lady flowers decay,
> And you must fade as well as they.

If I am right in reading "sees" in the last line but one, then even here, too, we have a reminiscence of the Ausonian idyll.

From the analysis which I have partly made and partly suggested in the foregoing pages, it will be seen how much modern poetry owes to now almost neglected sources in antique literature, and with what varied gracefulness of new life the singers of the past four centuries invested themes which they derived from scholarship. Other students, who have traversed different fields of European poetry, will probably be able to complete the pedigree which I have endeavoured to establish in its main outlines from Ausonius to Waller.

* "Ros Rosarum," p. 148. It is from "The Cruel Maid."

A COMPARISON OF ELIZABETHAN WITH VICTORIAN POETRY.

I.

English literature, under the Tudors and the first king of the house of Stuart, owed much of its unexampled richness to a felicitous combination of circumstances. Feudalism had received a mortal wound in the Wars of the Roses, and was dying. The people came to knowledge of itself, and acquired solidity during the reigns of Henry VII., Henry VIII., and Elizabeth. Englishmen were brought into the fellowship of European nations through Wolsey's audacious diplomacy. They began to feel their force as an important factor, which had henceforth to be reckoned with in peace or war. Grave perils attended the formation of Great Britain into a separate and self-sustaining integer of Europe; nor was it until the Protectorate that these islands made their full weight recognised. None of the perils, however, which shook England during the period of consolidation, sufficed to

disturb the equilibrium of government and social order. On the other hand, they stimulated patriotism, and braced the nation with a sense of its own dignity. Our final rupture with Rome, after the trials of Queen Mary's reign were over, satisfied the opinion of a large majority. Our collision with Spain, in the crisis marked by the Armada, took a turn which filled the population with reverent and religious enthusiasm. These two decisive passages in English history promoted the pride of the race, and inspired it with serious ardour. Instead of weakening the Crown or the Church, they had the effect of rendering both necessary to the nation. Then, when Scotland was united to England and Ireland, at the accession of James, a disciplined and nobly expansive people thought themselves for a moment on the pinnacle of felicity.

While the English were thus becoming a powerful and self-conscious nation, those intellectual changes which divided the mediæval from the modern period, and which we know by the names of Renaissance and Reformation, took place. It is a peculiarity of this transition time in our islands, that what used to be called "the new learning," with its new theories of education, its new way of regarding nature, and its new conceptions of human life, was introduced simultaneously with the Reformation. Italy had accomplished the

Revival of Learning; Germany had revolted against Catholicism. France had felt both movements unequally and partially, amid the confusion of civil wars and the clash of contending sects. Italy, after the Tridentine Council, was relapsing into reactionary dulness. Germany was dismembered by strifes and schisms. France underwent the throes of a passionate struggle, which subordinated the intellectual aspects of both Renaissance and Reformation to political interest. England alone, meanwhile, enjoyed the privilege of receiving that twofold influx of the modern spirit without an overwhelming strain upon her vital forces. The Marian persecution was severe enough to test the bias of the people, and to remind them of the serious points at issue, without rending society to its foundations. Humanism reached our shores when its first enthusiasms — enthusiasms which seemed in Italy to have brought again the gods and vices of the pagan past — had tempered their delirium. We have only to compare men like More, Ascham, Colet, Buchanan, Camden, Cheke, the pioneers of our Renaissance, with Filelfo, Poggio, Poliziano, Pontano, in order to perceive how far more sober and healthy was the tone of the new learning in Great Britain than in Italy.

In this connection it is worthy of notice that humanism, before it moulded the minds of the English, had already permeated Italian and French

literature. Classical erudition had been adapted to the needs of modern thought. Antique authors had been collected, printed, annotated, and translated. They were fairly mastered in the south, and assimilated to the style of the vernacular. By these means much of the learning popularised by our poets, essayists, and dramatists came to us at second-hand, and bore the stamp of contemporary genius. In like manner, the best works of Italian, French, Spanish, and German literature were introduced into Great Britain together with the classics. The age favoured translation, and English readers, before the close of the sixteenth century, were in possession of a cosmopolitan library in their mother tongue, including choice specimens of ancient and modern masterpieces.

These circumstances sufficiently account for the richness and variety of Elizabethan literature. They also help to explain two points which must strike every student of that literature—its native freshness, and its marked unity of style.

Elizabethan literature was fresh and native, because it was the utterance of a youthful race, aroused to vigorous self-consciousness under conditions which did not depress or exhaust its energies. The English opened frank eyes upon the discovery of the world and man, which had been effected by the Renaissance. They were not wearied with collecting, collating, correcting, transmitting to the

press. All the hard work of assimilating the humanities had been done for them. They had only to survey and to enjoy, to feel and to express, to lay themselves open to delightful influences, to con the noble lessons of the past, to thrill beneath the beauty and the awe of an authentic revelation. Criticism had not laid its cold, dry finger on the blossoms of the fancy. The new learning was still young enough to be a thing of wonder and entrancing joy. To absorb it sufficed. Like the blood made in the veins of a growing man by strong meat and sound wine, it coursed to the brain and created a fine frenzy. That was a period of bright ideas, stimulating creative faculty, animating the people with hope and expectation, undimmed, untarnished by the corrosion of the analytic reason. "Nobly wild, not mad," the adolescent giants of that age, Marlowe and Raleigh, Spenser and Shakespeare, broke into spontaneous numbers, charged with the wisdom and the passion of the ages fused in a divine clairvoyance.

Elizabethan literature has a marked unity of style. We notice a strong generic similarity in those poets which veils their specific differences. This is perhaps the first and most salient point of contrast between Elizabethan and Victorian literature. It makes a cautious critic pause. After the lapse of two centuries, he asks himself, will Byron, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth,

Landor, Tennyson, Campbell, William Morris, Rogers, Swinburne, Clough, Rossetti, Browning, Mrs. Browning, Matthew Arnold, and the rest of them, seem singing to one dominant tune, in spite of their so obvious differences? Will our posterity discern in them the note in common which we find in Sidney, Herrick, Spenser, Shakespeare, Fletcher, Marlowe, Jonson, Barnfield, Dekker, Marston, Chapman, Raleigh, Drayton, Drummond, Webster, and the rest of those great predecessors? The question has to be asked; but the answer is not easily given. We can neither reject ourselves into the past, nor project ourselves into the future, with certainty sufficient to decide whether what looks like similarity in the Elizabethan poets, and what looks like diversity in the Victorian poets, are illusions of the present.

Yet something can be attempted in explanation of the apparent puzzle. The circumstances of the Elizabethan age favoured unity of style. The language, to begin with, had recently been remade under the influence of new ideals and new educational systems. Far more than lapse of years and wastes of desolating warfare separated sixteenth-century English from the speech of Chaucer. The spirit itself, which shapes language to the use of mind, had changed through the action of quickening conceptions and powerfully excited energies. And to this change in the spirit the race

was eagerly responsive. In a certain way all writers felt the Bible, Greece, Rome, Italy, France, Germany; all strove to be in tune with the new learning. At the same time, criticism was hardly in its cradle; you find a trace of it in Jonson, Bacon, Selden, Camden; but it does not touch the general. The people were anything but analytical, and poetry issued from the very people's heart, as melody from the strings of the violoncello. The spontaneity which we have already noted as a main mark of Elizabethan utterance, led thus to unity of style. The way in which classical masterpieces were then studied, conduced to the same result. Those perennial sources of style were enjoyed in their entirety, absorbed, assimilated, reproduced with freedom. They were not closely scrutinised, examined with the microscope, studied with the view of emphasizing this or that peculiarity a single critic found in them. And the same holds good about contemporary foreign literatures. Everything which these literatures contained was grist for the English mill: not models to be copied, but stuff to be used.

Now compare the intellectual conditions of the Victorian age. Take language first. Instead of having no literary past, except Chaucer, Skelton, the English Bible, and Sir Thomas Malory behind our backs, we have the long self-conscious period between Dryden and Byron, during which our

mother tongue was carefully elaborated upon a definite system. Victorian poetry has to reckon with Elizabethan poetry and the poetry of Queen Anne—for English people call their epochs by the names of queens. This constitutes at the outset a great difference, making for diversity in style. A writer has more models to choose from, more openings for the exercise of his personal predilections. And the mental attitude has altered also. We are highly conscious of our aims, profoundly analytical. All study of literature has become critical and comparative. The scientific spirit makes itself powerfully felt in the domain of art. It is impossible for people of the present to be as fresh and native as the Elizabethans were. Such a mighty stream, *novies Styx interfusa*, in the shape of accumulated erudition, grave national experiences, spirit-quelling doubts, insurgent philosophies, and all too aching pressing facts and fears, divides the men of this time from the men of that. It is enough now to have indicated these points. The argument will return to some of them in detail. For the moment we may safely assert that a prominent note of Elizabethan as distinguished from Victorian literature is unity of tone, due to the felicitous circumstances of the nation in that earlier period.

II.

What, then, is the characteristic of Elizabethan poetry? I think the answer to this question lies in the words—freedom, adolescence, spontaneity; mainly freedom. The writers of that age were free from the bondage to great names, Virgil or Cicero or Seneca. They owned no allegiance to great languages, like the Latin; to famous canons of taste, like the Aristotelian unities; to scholastic authority and academical prescription. They were politically and socially free, adoring the majesty of England in the person of their sovereign, and flattering a national ideal when they burned poetic incense to Elizabeth. That strain of servility which jars upon our finer sense in the romantic epics of Ariosto and Tasso, is wholly absent from "The Faery Queen." They were notably free in all that appertains to religion. Where but in England could a playwright have used words at once so just and so bold as these of Dekker?

> The best of men
> That e'er wore earth about him, was a sufferer—
> A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit:
> The first true gentleman that ever breathed.

A delicate taste can hardly be offended by this reference to Christ, and yet we feel that it could not have been made except in an age of undisputed

liberty. Their freedom was the freedom of young strength, untrammelled energies, with El Dorado in the western main, and boundless regions for the mind to traverse. This makes their touch on truth and goodness and beauty so right, so natural, so unerring. They have the justice of perception, the clarity of vision, the cleanliness of feeling which belong to generous and healthy manhood in its earliest prime. The consequence of this freedom was that each man in that age wrote what he thought best, wrote out of himself, and sang spontaneously. He had no fear of academies, of censorship, of critical coteries, of ecclesiastical censure, before his eyes. How different in this respect was the liberty of Shakespeare from the servitude of Tasso. At the same time, as we have already seen, this spontaneity was controlled by a strong sense of national unity. The English were possessed with an ideal, which tuned their impassioned utterances to one keynote. The spirit of the people was patriotic, highly moralised, intensely human, animated by a robust belief in reality; martial, yet jealous of domestic peace; assiduous in toil, yet quick to overleap material obstacles and revel in the dreams of the imagination; manly, but delicate; inured to hardship, but not quelled as yet by disappointment and the disillusion of experience. In a word, Elizabethan poetry is the utterance of "a noble and puissant

nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks like an eagle muing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam."

Freedom being thus the dominant note of Elizabethan poetry, it follows that the genius of the race will return to it with love and admiration at epochs marked by the resurgent spirit of liberty. This is why the literature of the Victorian age has been so powerfully influenced by that of Elizabeth. The French Revolution shook Europe to the centre, and opened illimitable vistas at the commencement of the century. In 1815, England, after her long struggle with Napoleon, stood crowned with naval and military laurels, in possession of a hardly-earned peace. It is not to be wondered that critics like Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, editors like Gifford, historians like Collier, should have ransacked the forgotten treasures of the Shakespearian drama at this moment. Poetry aimed at Elizabethan phraseology and used Elizabethan metres. Byron adapted the Spenserian and octave stanzas to his purposes of satire and description; Keats and Shelley treated the heroic couplet with Elizabethan laxity of structure and variety of cadence; Wordsworth and Coleridge revived the Elizabethan rhythms of blank verse. The sonnet was cultivated, and lyrical measures assumed bewildering forms of richness. At the

same time, a revolt began against those canons of taste which had prevailed in the last century. Wordsworth denounced conventional poetic diction; it savoured of literary treason to profess a particular partiality for Pope; fancy was preferred to sense, exuberance of imagery to chastened style, audacity of invention to logic and correctness.

This return to Elizabethanism has marked the whole course of Victorian poetry. But times are changed, and we ourselves are changed in them. The men of this century have never recaptured "the first fine careless rapture" of the sixteenth century. What were dreams then, have become sober expectations. Instead of El Dorado we have conquered California, the gold-fields of Australia, the diamond mines of South Africa. Between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries North America was won and lost; East India was gained by heroism and adventure worthy of a Drake and Raleigh; and now the crown of that vast empire on the forehead of our Queen weighs heavy with the sense of serious responsibilities. The English race is no longer adolescent; we cannot model our national genius like a beautiful young hero rejoicing in his naked strength and scattering armies by his shout: the sculptor who did so would forget the years which have ploughed wrinkles on that hero's forehead, the steam-engines which are his chariot, the ironclad navies which

waft him over ocean, the electricity which plays like lightning in his eyes. Victorian poets cannot be spontaneous in the same sense as our ancestors were. Like Iago, they are nothing if not critical. Science has imposed on them her burden of analysis, and though science reveals horizons far beyond the dreams of Bacon, it fills the soul with something well-nigh kin to hopelessness. Man shrinks before the Universe. We have lived through so much; we have seen so many futile philosophies rise like mushrooms and perish; we have tried so many political experiments, and listened to so many demagogues of various complexions, that a world-fatigue has penetrated deep into our spirit. The masterpiece of the century is Goethe's *Faust*, and its hero suffers from the *Welt-schmerz*. A simple faith in God and the Bible yields to critical inquiry, comparative theology, doubts and difficulties of all kinds. Religious liberty in this age consists more in the right to disbelieve as we think best than to believe according to our conscience. Pessimism, already strong in Byron, has grown and gathered strength with introspection until we find it lurking in nearly all the sincerest utterances of the present. We are oppressed with social problems which admit of no solution, due to the vast increase of our population, to the industrial changes which have turned England from an agricultural into a manu-

facturing country, to the unequal distribution of wealth, the development of huge, hideous towns, the seething multitudes of vicious and miserable paupers which they harbour. We watch the gathering of revolutionary storm-clouds, hear the grumbling of thunder in the distance, and can only sit meanwhile in darkness—so gigantic and unmanageable are the forces now in labour for some mighty birth of time. Who can be optimistic under these conditions? "Merry England" sounds like a mockery now. Instead of merry England the Victorian poet has awful, earnest, grimly menacing London to sing in. His temptation, especially in the third period of our century, is to retire from the world into an artificial paradise of art, and there, among exotic fragrances and foreign airs, to seek a refuge from the sombre problems forced upon him by the actualities of life. These things were not felt so much at the beginning of the century; they are bringing it to a close in sadness and strong searchings of soul.

III.

Elizabethan genius found its main expression in the drama. No epic worthy of the name was produced in the sixteenth century, for Spenser's "Faery Queen" has not the right to be so styled. But every great national epoch which attains to utterance through art has a specific clairvoyance,

and England in the age we call Elizabethan was clairvoyant for the drama; that is to say, men wrought with an unerring instinct in this field, and the lesser talents were lifted into the sphere of the greater when they entered it. After the drama, and closely associated with it, came those songs for music in which the English of the sixteenth century excelled. The lyric rapture, that which has been called the lyric cry, penetrates all verbal music of that period. We find it modulating blank verse and controlling the rhythms of the couplet and the stanza. The best subsidiary work of the age consisted of translations, adaptations, and free handlings of antique themes in narrative verse. Chapman's "Homer," Fairfax's "Tasso," Marlowe's "Hero and Leander," Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" and the "Rape of Lucrece," rank among the masterpieces of Elizabethan poetry. But drama and song, when all accounts are settled, remain the crowning glories of that literature.

The Victorian age can boast no national drama. Poetical plays have indeed been produced which do credit to the talents of their authors.* Yet the century has not expressed its real stuff, nor shown its actual clairvoyance in that line. We cannot

* Darley, Landor, Beddoes, Horne, Procter, Shelley, Browning, Taylor, Swinburne, and possibly Tennyson, demand commemoration in a foot-note.

point to a Victorian drama as we do to an Elizabethan drama, and challenge the world to match it. This is due perhaps in part to those incalculable changes which have substituted the novel for the drama. The public of the present time is a public of readers rather than of hearers, and the muster-roll of brilliant novelists, from Scott and Jane Austen, through Thackeray and Dickens, down to George Eliot and George Meredith, can be written off against the playwrights of the sixteenth century. Poetry, surveyed from a sufficient altitude, claims these imaginative makers, though they used the vehicle of prose. Even less than the sixteenth has the nineteenth produced an epic, and for similar reasons. Tennyson chose the right name for his Arthurian string of studies when he called them "Idylls of the King." To claim for them epical coherence was only a brilliant afterthought. It is not given to any race under the conditions of conscious culture to create a genuine epic. That rare flower of art puts forth its bloom in the first dawn of national existence. If we except the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey," how few real epics does the human race possess! The German "Nibelungen Lied" is a late *rifacimento* of Scandinavian sagas. Sir Thomas Malory's "Morte d'Arthur," our nearest approach to a true epic, is the digest of a score of previous romances. The "Song of Roland" is an epical lyric. We call the "Æneid" an epic because

it throbs with the sense of Rome. *Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem.* We call the "Divine Comedy" an epic because it embalms the spirit of the Middle Ages at their close; we call "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" epics because they carry such a weight of meaning and are so monumentally constructed. But the "Æneid," the "Divine Comedy," and Milton's "Paradise" are not epics in the proper sense of the word; they are the products of reflection and individual genius, not the self-expression of a nation in its youth. And just as the novel has absorbed our forces for the drama, so has it satisfied our thirst for epical narration. In that hybrid form where poetry assumes the garb of prose, both drama and epic for the modern world lie embedded.

What, then, are the specific channels of Victorian utterance in verse? To define them is difficult, because they are so subtly varied and so inextricably interwoven. Yet I think they may be superficially described as the idyll and the lyric. Under the idyll I should class all narrative and descriptive poetry, of which this age has been extraordinarily prolific; sometimes assuming the form of minstrelsy, as in the lays of Scott; sometimes approaching to the classic style, as in the Hellenics of Landor; sometimes rivalling the novelette, as in the work of Tennyson; sometimes aiming at psychological analysis, as in the por-

traits drawn by Robert Browning; sometimes confining art to bare history, as in Crabbe; sometimes indulging flights of pure artistic fancy, as in Keats' "Endymion" and "Lamia." Under its many metamorphoses the narrative and descriptive poetry of our century bears the stamp of the idyll, because it is fragmentary and because it results in a picture. Here it inclines to the drama, here it borrows tone from the epic; in one place it is lyrical, in another it is didactic; fancy has presided over the birth of this piece, reflection has attended the production of that. But in each case the artist has seen his subject within narrow compass, treated that as a complete whole, and given to the world a poem in the narrative and descriptive style, reminding us of the epic in its general form, of the drama or the lyric in its particular treatment. Those who have read the technical lessons which the idylls of Theocritus convey, will understand why I classify this exuberant jungle of Victorian poetry under the common title of idyll.

No literature and no age has been more fertile of lyric poetry than English literature in the age of Victoria. The fact is apparent. I should superfluously burden my readers if I were to prove the point by reference to Byron, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Rossetti, Clough, Swinburne, Arnold, Tennyson, and I do not know how many of less illustrious but splendid names, in detail.

The causes are not far to seek. Without a comprehensive vehicle like the epic, which belongs to the first period of national life, or the drama, which belongs to its secondary period, our poets of a later day have had to sing from their inner selves, subjectively, introspectively, obeying impulses from nature and the world, which touched them not as they were Englishmen, but as they were this man or that woman. They had no main current of literature wherein to plunge themselves, and cry: "Ma naufragar m' è dolce in questo mar."* They could not forego what made them individuals; tyrannous circumstances of thought and experience rendered their sense of personality too acute. When they sang, they sang with their particular voice; and the lyric is the natural channel for such song. But what a complex thing is this Victorian lyric! It includes Wordsworth's sonnets and Rossetti's ballads, Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" and Keats' odes, Clough's "Easter Day" and Tennyson's "Maud," Swinburne's "Songs before Sunrise" and Browning's "Dramatis Personæ," Thomson's "City of Dreadful Night" and Mary Robinson's "Handful of Honeysuckles," Andrew Lang's Ballades and Sharp's "Weird of Michael Scot," Dobson's dealings with the eighteenth century and Noel's "Little Child's Monument," Barnes's Dorsetshire Poems and Buchanan's London

* "To drown in this great tide is sweet for me."

Lyrics, the songs from Empedocles on Etna and Ebenezer Jones's "Pagan's Drinking Chant," Shelley's Ode to the West Wind and Mrs. Browning's "Pan is Dead," Newman's hymns and Gosse's Chant Royal. The kaleidoscope presented by this lyric is so inexhaustible that any man with the fragment of a memory might pair off scores of poems by admired authors, and yet not fall upon the same parallels as those which I have made.

The genius of our century, debarred from epic, debarred from drama, falls back upon idyllic and lyrical expression. In the idyll it satisfies its objective craving after art. In the lyric it pours forth personality. It would be wrong, however, to limit the wealth of our poetry to these two branches. Such poems as Wordsworth's "Excursion," Byron's "Don Juan" and "Childe Harold," Mrs. Browning's "Aurora Leigh," William Morris's "Earthly Paradise," Clough's "Amours de Voyage," are not to be classified in either species. They are partly autobiographical, and in part the influence of the tale makes itself distinctly felt in them. Nor again can we omit the translations, of which so many have been made; some of them real masterpieces and additions to our literature. Cary's Dante, Rossetti's versions from the early Tuscan lyrists, Fitzgerald's Omar

Khayyam, are eminent examples. But the list might be largely extended. Then again Morris's "Song of Sigurd," Swinburne's "Tristram of Lyoness," E. Arnold's "Light of Asia," deserve a place apart, as epical rehandlings of memorable themes.

IV.

In all this Victorian poetry we find the limitations of our epoch, together with its eminent qualities. Criticism and contemplation have penetrated literature with a deeper and more pervasive thoughtfulness. Our poets have lost spontaneity and joyful utterance. But they have acquired a keener sense of the problems which perplex humanity. The author of "In Memoriam" struck a false note when he exclaimed:

> I sing but as the linnet sings.

Nothing can be more unlike a linnet's song than the metaphysical numbers of that justly valued threnody. Clough came closer to the truth when he hinted at the poet's problem in this age as thus:

> To finger idly some old Gordian knot,
> Unskilled to sunder and too weak to cleave,
> And with much toil attain to half-believe.

The most characteristic work of the century

has a double object, artistic and philosophical. Poetry is used to express some theory of life. In Byron the world-philosophy is cynical or pessimistic. Shelley interweaves his pantheism with visions of human perfectibility. Wordsworth proclaims an esoteric cult of nature. Swinburne at one time rails against the tyrant gods, at another preaches the gospel of republican revolt. Matthew Arnold embodies a system of ethical and æsthetical criticism in his verse. Clough expresses the changes which the Christian faith has undergone, and the perplexities of conduct. Thomson indulges the blackest pessimism, a pessimism more dolorous than Leopardi's. Browning is animated by a robust optimism, turning fearless somersaults upon the brink of the abyss. Mrs. Browning condenses speculations upon social and political problems. Roden Noel, too little appreciated to be rightly understood, attempts a world-embracing metaphysic of mysticism. Even those poets who do not yield so marked a residuum of philosophy are touched to sadness and gravity by the intellectual atmosphere in which they work. Virgil's great line:

Sunt lacrimæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt—

might be chosen as a motto for the *corpus poetarum* of our epoch. In reading what the

age has produced, certain phrases linger in our memory —

> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.
>
> The still, sad music of humanity.
>
> Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.
>
> Tears from the depth of some divine despair.
>
> Seek, seeker, in thyself, submit to find
> In the stones bread and life in the blank mind.

These haunt us like leading-phrases, the master notes of the whole music.

Starting with enthusiasm at the commencement of the century, our poets have gradually lost such glow of hope as inspired them with spontaneous numbers in its earlier decades. The wide survey of elder and contemporary literatures submitted to their gaze has rendered them more assimilative, reproductive, imitative, reminiscent than spontaneous. When Matthew Arnold defined poetry in general to be "a criticism of life," he uttered a curious and pregnant paradox. It would be hardly a paradox to assert that Victorian poetry is in large measure the criticism of all existing literatures. More and more we have dedicated our powers to the study of technicalities, to the cultivation of the graces, the elaboration of ornament,

and to the acclimatisation upon English soil of flowers borrowed from alien gardens of the Muses. We have forgotten what George Sand said to Flaubert about style: "Tu la considères comme un but, elle n'est qu'un effet." The result is a polychromatic abundance of what may be called cultured poetry, which does not reach the heart of the people, and does not express its spirit. That is due, no doubt, in part to the fact that there is less of aspiration than of meditation to deal with now, less of an actual joy in eventful living than of serious reflection upon the meanings and the purposes of life. Yet this poetry is true to the spirit of a critical and cultured age; and when the time comes to gather up the jewels of Victorian literature, it will be discovered how faithfully the poets have uttered the thoughts of the educated minority.

A comprehensive survey of our poetry is rendered difficult by the fact that no type, like the drama of the sixteenth century, has controlled its movement. We cannot regard it as a totality composed of many parts, progressing through several stages of development. In this respect, again, it obeys the intellectual conditions of the century. Its inner unity will eventually be found, not in the powerful projection of a nation's soul, but in the careful analysis and subtle delineation of thoughts and feelings which agitated society

during one of the most highly self-conscious and speculative periods which the world has passed through. The genius of the age is scientific, not artistic. In such an age poetry must perforce be auxiliary to science, showing how individual minds have been touched to fine issues of rhythmic utterance by the revolutions in thought which history, philosophy, and criticism are effecting.

V.

Passing from these general reflections to points of comparison in detail, we must remember that Victorian poetry started with a return to Elizabethan, and that this motive impulse has never wholly been lost sight of. The two periods may be fitly compared in that which both possess in common, a copious and splendid lyric. Our means of studying Elizabethan lyric poetry have been largely increased in the past years by the labours of Mr. Thomas Oliphant, Professor Arber, Mr. W. J. Linton, and Mr. A. H. Bullen. To the last-named of these gentlemen we owe three volumes of lyrics culled from Elizabethan song-books, which are a perfect mine of hitherto neglected treasures.* Taken in connection with the songs

* They are published by Mr. J. C. Nimmo, the last of them called "Love Poems from the Song-Books of the Seventeenth Century," being privately printed.

from the dramatists and the collected lyrics of men like Sidney, Raleigh, Spenser, Herrick, these books furnish us with a tolerably complete body of poems in this species.

What strikes us in the whole of this great mass of lyric poetry, is its perfect adaptation to music, its limpidity and directness of utterance. Like Shelley's skylark, the poet has been

> Pouring his full heart
> In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Each composition is meant to be sung, and can be sung, because the poet's soul was singing when he made it. They are not all of one kind or of equal simplicity. The lyrics from the song-books, for example, have not the intensity of some songs introduced into the dramas of that period, "in which," as Mr. Pater once observed while speaking of the verses sung by Mariana's page in *Measure for Measure*, "the kindling power and poetry of the whole play seems to pass for a moment into an actual strain of music." They are rarely so high-strung and weighty with meaning as Webster's dirges, or as Ford's and Shirley's solemn descants on the transitoriness of earthly love and glory. Nor, again, do we often welcome in them that fulness of romantic colour which makes the lyrics of Beaumont and Fletcher so resplendent. This is perhaps because their melodies are not the out-

growth of dramatic situations, but have their life and being in the aërial element of musical sound. For the purposes of singing they are exactly adequate, being substantial enough to sustain and animate the notes, and yet so slight as not to overburden these with too much meditation and emotion. We feel that they have arisen from the natural marrying of musical words to musical phrases in the minds which made them. They are the right verbal counterpart to vocal and instrumental melody, never perplexing and surcharging the tones which need language for a vehicle with complexities of fancy, involutions of ideas, or the disturbing tyranny of vehement passions. And this right quality of song, the presence of which indicates widespread familiarity with musical requirements in England of the sixteenth century, may be likewise found in the more deliberate lyrics of dramatic or literary poets — in Jonson's and Shakespeare's stanzas, in the lofty odes of Spenser and the jewelled workmanship of Herrick.

We discover but little of this quality in the lyrics of the Victorian age. It is noticeable that those poets upon whom we are apt to set the least store now, as Byron, Scott, Hood, Campbell, Moore, Barry Cornwall, Mrs. Hemans, possessed it in greater perfection than their more illustrious contemporaries.

I once asked an eminent musician, the late

Madame Goldschmidt, why Shelley's lyrics were ill-adapted to music. She made me read aloud to her the "Song of Pan" and those lovely lines "To the Night," "Swiftly walk o'er the western wave, Spirit of Night!" Then she pointed out how the verbal melody seemed intended to be self-sufficing in these lyrics, how full of complicated thoughts and changeful images the verse is, how packed with consonants the words are, how the tone of emotion alters, and how no one melodic phrase could be found to fit the dædal woof of the poetic emotion.

> "Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
> Star-inwrought!
> Blind with thine hair the eyes of day,
> Kiss her until she be wearied out—

"How different that is," said Madame Goldschmidt, "from the *largo* of your Milton:

> "Let the bright Seraphim in burning row,
> Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow!*

"How different it is from Heine's simplicity:

> "Auf Flügeln des Gesanges
> Herzliebchen trag' ich dich fort.

* Madame Goldschmidt sang these lines from the book of Handel's "Samson." In Milton they begin with *where*, not *let*.

"I can sing *them*," and she did sing them then and there, much to my delight; "and I can sing Dryden, but I could not sing your Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats; no, and not much of your Tennyson either. Tennyson has sought out all the solid, sharp words, and put them together; music cannot come between." This was long ago, and it gave me many things to think over, until I could comprehend to what extent the best lyrics of the Victorian age are not made to be sung.

Madame Goldschmidt's remarks were only partially true perhaps. There is no reason, if we possessed a Schubert, why Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" should not be set to music; and Handel could surely have written alternate choruses and solos for a considerable part of Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty." Yet the fact remains that Victorian lyrics are not so singable as Elizabethan lyrics; and the reason is that they are far more complex, not in their verbal structure merely, but in the thoughts, images, emotions which have prompted them. The words carry too many, too various, too contemplative suggestions. Nothing can be lyrically more lovely than:

> Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.

Or than:

> Fair are others: none beholds thee:
> But thy voice sounds low and tender
> Like the fairest, for it folds thee
> From the sight, that liquid splendour;
> And all feel, yet see thee never,
> As I feel now, lost for ever!

Or than:

> Will no one tell me what she sings?
> Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
> For old, unhappy, far-off things,
> And battles long ago;
> Or is it some more humble lay,
> Familiar matter of to-day?
> Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
> That has been, and may be again.

But Wordsworth in the last of these examples is meditative, reflective, questioning; his stanza will not suit the directness of musical melody. But the finest phrases in the specimens from Keats and Shelley, "charmed magic casements," "perilous seas," "that liquid splendour," perplex and impede the movement of song.

It is not precisely in poignancy or depth or gravity of thought that the Victorian differ from the Elizabethan lyrists. What can be more poignant than:

> Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
> Thou dost not bite so nigh

As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remembered not.

What can be deeper than:

Of what is't fools make such vain keeping?
Sin their conception, their birth weeping;
Their life a general mist of error,
Their death a hideous storm of terror.

What can be graver than:

The glories of our birth and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate,
Death lays his icy hand on kings.

For pure poignancy, profundity, and weight, Elizabethan lyrics will compare not unfavourably with Victorian. The difference does not consist in the ore worked by the lyrists, but in their way of handling it. In this latter age a poet allows himself far wider scope of treatment when he writes a song. He does not think of the music of voice or viol, but of that harmony which intellectually sounds in the ears of the soul. The result is a wealthier and fuller symphony, reaching the imaginative sense not upon the path of musical sound, but appealing to the mental ear and also to that "inward eye which is the bliss of solitude."

The Victorian lyric, superior in its range, suggestiveness, variety, and richness, inferior in its spontaneity and birdlike intonation, corresponds to the highly-strung and panharmonic instrument of the poet's spirit which produced it, and to the manifold sympathies of the reader's mind for which it was intended. It is iridescent with the intermingled hues of fancy, contemplation, gnomic wisdom, personal passion, discursive rhetoric, idyllic picture-painting. Modes of complicated expression, involving serried reasoning, audacious metaphors, elliptical imagery, and rapid modulations from one key of feeling to another, which a playwright like Shakespeare employed only in his dramatic dialogue, find themselves at home in the lyrical poetry of our age.

VI.

For another point of comparison, let us take some of those "lyrical interbreathings" in Elizabethan dramatic dialogue, which are surcharged with sweetness, and contrast these with the sweetness of Victorian verse. I might select Shakespeare's lines upon the flowers scattered by Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*. But I prefer to choose my examples from less illustrious sources. Here, then, is the sweetness of Fletcher:

> I do her wrong, much wrong; she's young and blessed,
> Fair as the spring, and as his blossoms tender;

But I, a nipping north-wind, my head hung
With hails and frosty icicles: are the souls so too,
When they depart hence—lame, and old, and loveless?
Ah, no! 'tis ever youth there: age and death
Follow our flesh no more; and that forced opinion,
That spirits have no sexes, I believe not.

Here is the sweetness of Ford:

For he is like to something I remember,
A great while since, a long, long time ago.

Here is the sweetness of Dekker:

No, my dear lady, I could weary stars,
And force the wakeful moon to lose her eyes,
By my late watching, but to wait on you.
When at your prayers you kneel before the altar,
Methinks I'm singing with some quire in heaven,
So blest I hold me in your company.

Here is the sweetness of Massinger:

This beauty, in the blossom of my youth,
When my first fire knew no adulterate incense,
Nor I no way to flatter but my fondness,
In all the bravery my friends could show me,
In all the faith my innocence could give me,
In the best language my true tongue could tell me,
And in the broken sighs my sick heart lent me,
I sued and served.

The sweetness of these passages, none of which are singular, or such as may not be easily matched with scores of equal passages from the same and

other playwrights, is like the sweetness of honey distilling from the honeycomb. It falls unsought and unpremeditated with the perfume of wilding flowers. Nay more, like honey from the jaws of Samson's lion, we feel it to be *ex forti dulcedo*, the sweetness of strength.

When we turn to the sweetness of Victorian poetry, we rarely find exactly the same quality. In Keats it is overloaded; in Coleridge it is sultry; in William Morris it is cloying; in Swinburne it is inebriating; in Shelley it is volatilised; in Wordsworth it is somewhat thin and arid; in Tennyson it is sumptuous; in Rossetti it is powerfully perfumed. We have exchanged the hedgerow flowers for heavy-headed double roses, and instead of honey we are not unfrequently reminded—pardon the expression—of jam. Poets, who by happy accident or deliberate enthusiasm, have at some moment come nearest to the Elizabethan simplicity and liquidity of utterance, catch this honeyed sweetness best. We feel that Browning caught it when he wrote:

> A footfall there
> Suffices to upturn to the warm air
> Half-germinating spices; mere decay
> Produces richer life, and day by day
> New pollen on the lily petal grows,
> And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.

Tennyson produced something different when he wrote that musical idyll—"Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height," which closes upon two incomparable lines of linked melody long drawn out:

> The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
> And murmuring of innumerable bees.

Here, as in the former instance of lyric verse, it would be unreasonable to contend that Elizabethan poets surpassed the Victorian. On the contrary, the latter know more distinctly what they are about, and sustain the sweetness of their style at a more equal level. They are capable of a more perfectly even flow of sugared verse. What we have to notice is that the quality has altered, and that the change is due to the more involved, more concentrated intellectual conditions of the later age. Poets are no longer contented with impulsive expression. And as I said before, they cannot "recapture the first fine careless rapture" of their adolescent masters in the art of song. The wayward breezes and the breath of wild flowers in that earlier sweetness escape them.

VII.

The freedom and spontaneity of the Elizabethan age had attendant drawbacks. Owing to the absence of reflection and self-criticism, poets fell into the vices of extravagance and exaggeration, bombast and euphuism. In their use of language, the indulgence of their fancy, the expression of sentiment and the choice of imagery, they sought after emphasis, and displayed but little feeling for the virtue of reserve. . All the playwrights, without even the exception of Shakespeare, are tainted with these blemishes. Jonson, who was an excellent critic when he dictated mature opinions in prose, showed a lack of taste and selection in his dramas. There is a carelessness, a want of balance, a defect of judgment in the choice of materials and their management, a slovenliness of execution, throughout the work of that period. Superfluities of every kind abound, and at the same time we are distressed by singular baldness in details. What can be poorer, for example, than Jonson's translations from Virgil and Catullus, more clumsy and superfluous than his translations from Sallust and Tacitus? Poets seem to have been satisfied with saying "This will do," instead of labouring till the thing was as it had to be. They tossed their beauties like foam upon the tide of tumultuous and energetic inspiration. Yet even in this carelessness and un-

considered fecundity, we recognise some of the noblest qualities of the Elizabethan genius. There is nothing small or mean or compassed in that art. Its vices are the vices of the prodigal, not of the miser; of the genial spendthrift, whose imprudence lies nearer to generosity than to wanton waste. We pardon many faults for the abounding vigour which marks these poets; for their wealth of suggestive ideas, their true sympathy with nature, their insight into the workings of the human heart, their profuse stream of fresh and healthy feeling.

When the Elizabethan spirit declined in England, it was the business of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to impose limits on all this "unchartered freedom" of the intellect. Then the good and bad effects of critical canons and academical authority came to light. We had our Dryden and our Pope, our Goldsmith and Swift, our Addison and Steele, our Fielding and Johnson. But we had also a deplorable lack of real poetry in comparison with the foison of Elizabethan harvests. If not miserly, the English genius, so far as fancy and imagination are concerned, became thrifty. It erred by caution rather than by carelessness. It doled its treasures out like one who has a well-filled purse indeed, but who is not hopeful of turning all he touches into gold like Midas.

At the beginning of the Victorian age one sign

of the return to Elizabethanism was the license which poets allowed themselves in matters pertaining to their art. Keats, in "Endymion," Shelley, in "The Revolt of Islam," Byron, in nearly every portion of his work, displayed Elizabethan faults of emphasis, unpruned luxuriance, defective balance. It was impossible, however, for the nineteenth century to be as euphuistic or as chaotic as the sixteenth. Taste, trained by critical education, and moulded by the writers of Queen Anne's reign, might rebel against rules, but could not help regarding them. In spite of these restraints, however, poets who almost exactly reproduced the Elizabethans in their blemishes and virtues, like Wells and Beddoes, poets who caricatured them with a pathetic touch of difference, like Sydney Dobell and Alexander Smith, appeared about the middle of the century. And then Browning loomed on the horizon, surely the brawniest neo-Elizabethan Titan whom our age has seen, and whom it has latterly chosen to adore. As years advanced, mere haphazard fluency grew to be less and less admired; and while keeping still within the sphere of romantic as opposed to classical art, the English poets aimed at chastened diction, correct form, polished versification. Tennyson, who represents the height of the Victorian period, brought poetic style again to the Miltonic or Virgilian point of finish. In him a just conception

of the work as a whole, a consciousness of his aims and how to attain them, together with a high standard of verbal execution, are combined with richness of fancy and sensuous magnificence worthy of an Elizabethan poet in all his glory.

When, therefore, we compare the two epochs upon this point of taste and style, we are able to award the palm of excellence to the latter. Having lost much, we have gained at least what is implied in artistic self-control, without relapsing into the rigidity of the last century.

VIII.

The freedom, about which I have said so much, as forming the main note of Elizabethan poetry, accounts for the boldness with which men of letters treated moral topics, and for their clear-sighted outlook over a vast sphere of ethical casuistry. Not to the spirit of that age, but to the genius of our nation, I ascribe the manly instinct which guided these pioneers of exploration and experience through many a hazardous passage. The touch of the Elizabethan poets in such matters was almost uniformly right. They may show themselves gross, plain-spoken, voluptuous. We should not tolerate Jonson's Crispinus, or Shakespeare's Mercutio, or Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* at the present day. But they were not prurient or wilfully provocative. It is impossible to imagine an Elizabethan Aretino,

or an Elizabethan Beccadelli—writers, that is to say, who deliberately attempt to interest those who read their works in moral garbage. Of garbage there is enough in that literature, and more than enough; but only in the same sense as there were open drains and kennels in the streets of London, by the brink of which high-tempered gentlemen walked, and duels were fought, while dreams of love warmed young imaginations, and wise debates on statecraft or the destinies of empires were held by greybeards. Of such kind is the rivulet of filth in Elizabethan poetry, coursing, as the sewer then coursed, along the paths of men, dividing human habitations.

We have forced the sewage, which is inseparable from humanity, to run underneath our streets and houses. We have prohibited the entrance of unsavoury topics into our literature. If Marston were born again among us we should stop our noses, and bid the fellow stand aloof. Even Thomas Carlyle has been christened by even Mr. Swinburne, Coprostomos, or some such Byzantine title, indicating intolerable coarseness. This shows how resolute we are to root out physical noisomeness, and with what sincerity we prefer typhoid poison to the plague accompanied by evil odours. It does not prove that we are spiritually cleaner than our ancestors. The right deduction is that the race has preserved its wholesomeness under condi

tions altered by a change of manners. Neither then nor now, in the age of Elizabeth or in the age of Victoria, has the English race devoted its deliberate attention to nastiness.

In breadth of view, variety of subject, our Victorian poets rival the Elizabethan. Life has been touched again at all points and under every aspect with equal boldness and with almost equal manliness. But since the drama has ceased to be the leading form of literature, the treatment of moral topics has of necessity become more analytical and reflective. If space allowed, this opinion might be supported by a comparison of the two epochs with regard to philosophic poetry. In sententious maxims, apophthegms on human fate, pithy saws, and proverbial hints for conduct, Elizabethan literature abounds. But we do not here meet with poems steeped in a pervading tone of thought—thought issuing from the writer's self, shaping his judgments, controlling his sensations, modelling his language, forcing the reader to sojourn for a season in the brain-wrought palace of his mood. For instance, Shakespeare uttered the surest word of imaginative doubt, of that scepticism which makes man question his own substantiality, when Prospero exclaimed:

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

Marston in one phrase expressed man's desire to escape from self, that impossible desire which underlies all reaction against the facts of personal existence:

> Can man by no means creep out of himself,
> And leave the slough of viperous grief behind?

Webster reiterated a dark conviction of man's impotence in lines like these:

> We are merely the stars' tennis-balls, struck and bandied
> Which way please them.

Yet neither these nor any other Elizabethan poets elaborated their far-reaching views on life into schemes of versified philosophy. We do not find among them a Shelley or a Thomson. Pungent as the gnomic sentences of that age may be, they have relief and background in a large sane sympathy with man's variety of vital functions. The rapier of penetrative scrutiny is plunged and replunged into the deepest and most sensitive recesses of our being. But the thinker speedily withdraws his weapon, and suffers imagination to play with equal curiosity upon the stuff of action, passion, diurnal interests, the woof of sentient self-satisfied existence. Regarding human nature as a complex whole, those poets seized on its generic aspects and touched each aspect with brief incisive precision. Our poets are apt to concentrate their mind upon

one aspect, and to sublimate this into an all-engrossing element, which gives a certain sustained colour to their work. Less rich in gnomic wisdom, they are more potent in the communication of settled moods—more "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." It follows that while the Elizabethans had nothing of what Goethe called "lazzaretto poetry," we have much. The affectations of our age do not run toward verbal euphuism, but toward sickliness of sentiment and a simulated discontent with the world around us. A man of Mr. Mallock's calibre would not have set society in the sixteenth century at work upon the problem, "Is life worth living?" Schopenhauer and Hartmann could hardly have existed then, and they assuredly would not have found disciples. But in an age which produces essayists and philosophers of this sort, poetry cannot fail to be introspective and tinged with morbidity. Fortunately, though this is so, few verses have been written by Englishmen during the nineteenth century of which their authors need repent upon the death-bed.

IX.

The Elizabethan poets, far more truly than their Italian predecessors, if we except Dante, and more truly than any of their contemporaries in other countries, loved external nature for its own sake. There is hardly any aspect of the visible world,

from the flowers of the field to the storm-clouds of the zenith, from the stars in their courses to the moonlight sleeping on a bank, from the embossed foam, covering the sea-verge, to the topless Apennines, which was not seized with fine objective sensibility and illustrated with apt imagery by Shakespeare and his comrades. Yet, keenly appreciative of nature as these poets were, nature remained a background to humanity in all their pictures. Her wonders were treated as adjuncts to man, who moved across the earth and viewed its miracles upon his passage. Therefore, although imaginatively and sympathetically handled, these things were lightly and casually sketched.

The case is different with the literature of this century, for reasons which can be stated. In the first place, our poets have mostly been men leading a solitary life, in close connection with nature, withdrawn from the busy hum of populous cities. Byron, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Rossetti: it is clear, by only mentioning the leading poets of our age, that this is the fact; and to enlarge the list would be to prove the point superfluously. Unlike the writers of the Restoration and Queen Anne's reign, Victorian poets have not breathed the atmosphere of society, the town, the coffee-house. Even if they lived in London, the town, the coffee-house, society had ceased to exist for

them. Unlike the writers of Elizabeth's and James's reigns, they have not had the theatre, with its paramount interest in human action and passion, its vast and varied audience, to concentrate their gaze on man. And while circumstance divided them in this way from what Pope called "the proper study of mankind," the special forms of poetry they cultivated—idyllic and contemplative verse, lyric in its extended sense, descriptive and reflective—led them perforce to nature as a source of inspiration. They worked, moreover, through a period in which the sister art of painting devoted herself continually more and more to the delineation of the outer world in landscape. And this brings us to the decisive difference, the deep and underlying reason why external nature has exercised so powerful and penetrative an influence over contemporary poetry. What we call science, that main energy of the age, which has sapped old systems of thought, and is creating a new basis for religion, forces man to regard himself as part and parcel of the universe. He is no longer merely *in* it, moving through it, viewing it and turning it round, as Sir Thomas Browne delightfully said, for his recreation. He knows himself to be, in a deep and serious sense, *of* it, obedient to the elements, owning allegiance to the sun.

Even the poets of the beginning of the century,

who resented the impact of science most—even Keats, who cried:

> Do not all charms fly
> At the mere touch of cold philosophy?

bowed to the dominant spirit of the nineteenth century. Keats, "the Elizabethan born out of due time," as he has been called, kept himself indeed unspotted from the contagion of science. Yet his passion for nature, moving though it did on lines traced by Spenser, has a far greater intensity, a far more fiery self-abandonment to the intoxication of earth, than would have been possible in the sixteenth century. Professor Conington used to formulate Keats's craving after nature in a somewhat ribald epigram: "Would thou wert a lollipop, then I could suck thee." The modern spirit took this form of sensuous imaginative subjectivity in Keats. In Byron it became a kind of lust, burning but disembodied, an escapement of the defrauded and disillusioned soul into communings with forces blindly felt to be in better and more natural tune with him than men were. Shelley's metaphysical mind was touched by nature to utterances of rapt philosophy, which may some day form the sacred songs of universal religion. "Prometheus Unbound" and the peroration of "Adonais" enclose in liquid numbers that sense of spirituality permeating the material world upon which our future hopes are founded.

Wordsworth, working apart from his contemporaries, expressed man's affinity to nature and man's dependence on the cosmic order with greater reserve. Still, it is difficult to go farther in nature-worship than Wordsworth did in those sublimely pathetic lines written above Tintern Abbey; and nothing indicates the difference between the Victorian and the Elizabethan touch on the world better than his blank verse fragment describing a pedestrian journey through the Simplon Pass.

In the course of the nineteenth century it might seem as though this passion for nature—the passion of Keats, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth—had declined. To assume this would, however, be a great mistake. What has steadily declined is the Elizabethan strain, the way of looking upon nature from outside. The modern strain, the way of looking upon nature as congenial to man, has strengthened, but with fear and rending of the heart, and doubt. The time is not yet ripe for poetry to resume the results of science with imaginative grasp. What has been called the cosmic enthusiasm is too undefined as yet, too unmanageable, too pregnant with anxious and agitating surmise, to find free utterance in emotional literature. In our days science is more vitally poetical than art; it opens wider horizons and excites the spirit more than verse can do. Where are the fictions of the fancy compared with the

vistas revealed by astronomers, biologists, physicists, geologists? Yet signs are not wanting—I see them in some of the shorter poems of Lord Tennyson, I see them in the great neglected work of Roden Noel, I see them in the fugitive attempts of many lesser men than these—which justify a sober critic in predicting that our century's enthusiasm for nature is but the prelude to a more majestic poetry, combining truth with faith and fact with imagination, than the world has ever known.

X.

It will have been noticed that in this essay the terms Elizabethan and Victorian are used with considerable laxity. The object is to define two periods of English literature, the one extending from Wyatt to Milton, or, roughly speaking, from the year 1530 to the year 1650, the other covering the whole of the nineteenth century, and dating from the publication of Walter Savage Landor's "Gebir." These two periods are divided by a space of a hundred and fifty years, during which our literature developed upon lines divergent from the course taken by the Renaissance of the sixteenth century. I have contended that Victorian literature is marked by a reaction in favour of Elizabethanism, and that the general scope and tone of poetry in these periods are closely similar.

Form is a matter of such prominence in art

that I shall perhaps be excused for recapitulating some points upon this topic. During the Restoration and Queen Anne's reign, versifiers lost the power and liking for that English unrhymed iambic, which began with Marlowe and culminated with Milton. They dropped the use of lyric measures, rarely employed the sestine or the octave or the Spenserian stanza, and so utterly neglected the sonnet, that even a poet of Gray's exquisite tact was unable to produce a tolerable specimen. The song became neat, terse, epigrammatic, shorn of picturesqueness, sparkling with elegance. But the dominant metre of the eighteenth century was the rhyming couplet. Poets used this form with a fine sense of its point, with a sustained respect for its structural limitations; not as the Elizabethans had employed it, loosely, with variety of pause and period, and with frequent *enjambements* from one line to another. The wilding graces which we appreciate in the couplets of Marlowe, Beaumont, Spenser, Fletcher, were abhorred by the school of versifiers at whose head stands Pope.

In close connection with these changes in the form of poetry the intermediate period of a hundred and fifty years exhibits a marked alteration of artistic aim and feeling. Diction is corrected, luxuriant shoots are pruned; wit, sense, and taste —words recurring with significant frequency in the

literature of the eighteenth century—are cultivated at the expense of imagination and capricious fancy. At the height of the epoch a conceit is held in abomination, and a play on words regarded as a crime. The point and polish of Pope, the limpid purity of Goldsmith, the weighty eloquence of Johnson, were the climax of this counter movement in our literature. Didactic, satirical, epistolary compositions assumed predominance under the reign of criticism, sense, restricted form.

With the dawn of the Victorian age a second reaction set in. It was indicated by the Rowley poems of Chatterton, the lyrics of Blake, the sonnets of Bowles, the blank verse of Cowper and of Landor. Then the current ran strongly, as we have already seen, toward Elizabethan metres, Elizabethan modes of workmanship, and ways of regarding art and nature. The English Renaissance of the sixteenth century became renascent in the nineteenth.

It has been the purpose of the foregoing pages to show in what way this renascent Elizabethanism of the Victorian epoch differs from that of the earlier period; how the altered conditions of English life, especially in the growth of great cities and the emergence of grave social problems through the development of mechanical industry, have saddened and subdued the tone of our poets; how criticism and the physical sciences, together

with changes in religious thought, have affected their outlook over the world and man; why they have become more contemplative and analytical, less spontaneous, with a tendency to pessimism, instead of the genial optimism of their predecessors; and finally, to what extent the absence of a commanding type of national art, like the drama, has forced them into idyllic, descriptive, meditative, and lyrical forms of utterance.

It is impossible to condense the net result of this comparison in a single formula. Yet one of the principal conclusions to which it leads us may be singled out. When we survey the literatures of these two epochs, we shall be struck with the generalising force and breadth of the earlier, the particularising subtlety and minuteness of the latter. The Elizabethans seem to sing with one voice, although the key in which their melody is cast may vary. They treat of nature and of man from a common point of view, albeit the world and humanity affect them differently. The Victorians have each a voice of his own, an attitude toward man and nature determined by specific mental faculty. Each has been born something separate, and made something still more separate by education. Elizabethan art is instinctive, Victorian art reflective. The material submitted to the workman in the one age is a complex whole; and this is surveyed in its superficies, seized in its salient

aspects. In the other age the complex has been disintegrated, parcelled into details by the operation of sympathies and intuitions proper to distinct individualities. Our first question with regard to an Elizabethan is: What grasp and grip does he possess upon the common stuff of art? Our first question with regard to a Victorian is: How does the man envisage things, from what point of view does he start, by what specific spirit is he controlled? Thus in the nineteenth century we come face to face with individualities who affect us mainly through the tone of their particular natures. The poets are critical and self-conscious in creation. We are critical and self-conscious in submission to their influence, in estimating their achievement. This intimate and pungent personality, settling the poet's attitude toward things, moulding his moral sympathies, flavouring his philosophy of life and conduct, colouring his style, separating him from fellow-workers, is the leading characteristic of Victorian literature—that which distinguishes it most markedly from the Elizabethan.

While many points have been passed in review much has naturally been omitted, and the method of treatment has necessitated the suppression of important modifications. It would in the one case have been interesting to raise the question how far Puritanism influenced the national tone in literature; whether, for example, the abeyance into which music

fell after the Commonwealth, had anything to do with the decline of song and spontaneous melody. It would have been desirable in the second case, while treating of Restoration, Queen Anne, and Georgian poetry, to have qualified some sweeping statements by an examination of a lyrist like Gray, and to have shown to what extent the three main periods marked out shade into one another at their edges. But two Greek proverbs, no less than want of space, warn me to lay down the pen here. "Nothing overmuch," "The half is better than the whole."

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

DARWIN'S THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD.

No small interest attaches to the religious opinions of a man who influenced our thoughts about the world so much as the late Charles Darwin did. His biography, written by his son Francis Darwin, contains a chapter on Religion, in which some valuable details are communicated.* I do not think that more ought to be desired or expected from a man of Darwin's stamp than the suspended judgment which concludes his trenchant and yet cautious utterances upon the subject of theology. "The safest conclusion seems to me that the whole subject is beyond the scope of man's intellect; but man can do his duty."† Having arrived at the opinion that ontology is hardly a fit topic for the human reason, Darwin states his own attitude in the following modest phrases:‡

> What my own views may be is a question of no consequence to any one but myself. But as you ask, I may state that my judgment often fluctuates. . . . In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an Atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God. I think that generally (and more and more as I grow older), but not always, that an Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind.

It is clear from this quotation that Darwin did not accept Atheist and Agnostic as convertible terms. If we collect the

* Vol. i. cap. viii. † P. 307. ‡ P. 304.

sense of all his dicta upon the relation of the world to a Divine Being, we shall perceive that he regarded a God as the most reasonable hypothesis, but that many things in the order of the universe, "the increased amount of suffering through the world,"* for instance, were obstacles to his maintenance of this hypothesis in full faith. What he meant by Agnosticism appears to have been an indecision as to the definition of God, and a profound doubt as to the power possessed by man of reaching Him. One paragraph from his letter dictated in answer to a German student puts this very plainly :†

> He considers that the theory of Evolution is quite compatible with the belief in a God; but that you must remember that different persons have different definitions of what they mean by God.

Critical investigation of the so-called evidences of Christianity, and the comparison of other religions, brought him to a practical abandonment of revelation.‡ He felt that the immortality of the soul has to be regarded as an open question.§ He discussed Pessimism with a clear perception of its ground and issues; and on the whole he pronounced himself a moderate Optimist.‖ He rejected the subjective or sentimental "argument for the existence of an intelligent God, drawn from the deep inward conviction and feelings which are experienced by most persons."¶ At the same time, he recorded his opinion that the argument drawn from reason was more cogent with his mind. He could not bring himself to regard "this immense and wonderful universe, including man, with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of

* P. 307. † P. 307.

‡ P. 307, "For myself," etc. P. 308, "But I had gradually," down to "had some weight with me."

§ P. 307, "As for a future life," etc.

‖ P. 307, "Nor can I overlook," etc. P. 309–11, "Some writers indeed," down to "variation and natural selection."

¶ P. 312, "Formerly I was led," etc.

blind chance or necessity."* In like manner the argument derived, partly from subjective instinct, partly from reason, for the immortality of the soul, had considerable weight with him.† His chief doubt, in valuing these arguments from instinct and reason, was whether the mind of man can be trusted to draw any conclusions in the matter.‡ Returning at last to the point from which we started, he declares:§ "I cannot pretend to throw the least light on such abstruse problems. The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us; and I for one must be content to remain an Agnostic."

What Darwin meant by being an Agnostic seems pretty clear now; and it is also pretty clear why he felt sometimes that he "deserved to be called a Theist."‖

Agnostic is the vague denomination for a genus including several species. According to their temperament or to their earlier associations, Agnostics lean either to Atheism or to Theism. They agree in pronouncing the problem of the universe to be insoluble; but they are variously coloured by divers inclinations toward the faiths they have abandoned. One is an Optimist by natural bent, another is a Pessimist. But their common link is a certain negative relation to creeds they formerly professed. Among Agnostics, Darwin leant toward Theism. Habit, instinct, and reason drew him in that direction. It was long before he worked off his early belief in revelation, and the nature of that belief continued to qualify his reasoning when he entertained theological speculations.

I gather from several passages in this chapter that Darwin never transcended the conception of Deity as Providence, as a

* P. 312. Compared p. 306, "But I may say that the impossibility," etc. Also p. 316, "Nevertheless, you have expressed," etc.

† P. 312, "With respect to immortality," down to "will not appear so dreadful."

‡ P. 313, "But then arises the doubt," etc. P. 316. "But then with me the horrid doubt," etc.

§ P. 313.

‖ P. 312, "When thus reflecting," etc.

designing Person, with purpose in each detail of creation.* These passages are in part directed against teleology. But they also show that their author still thought of God from Paley's point of view.† He continued to regard God as the theologians of English orthodoxy made Him—as a Being constructing the world from outside, planning its contrivances and directing each event to a calculated end. Darwin never speaks as though the conception of Deity immanent in the universe were tenable.

For example, he remarks that while he (Darwin) is designedly shooting a bird in order to obtain food, the lightning is destroying a good man. "Do you believe," he asks, "that God designedly killed this man? Many or most persons believe this; I can't and don't." Here a dilemma is stated: either God made the lightning kill a good man in the same way as I killed a bird, or He did not. It does not occur to him that there is no dilemma except upon his own assumption that God directed the flash of lightning with the providential design of killing the good man, just as he (Darwin) discharged his gun with the purpose of killing the bird. Then he proceeds to another instance: "If you believe so (*i.e.* that God *designedly* killed this man), do you believe that when a swallow snaps up a gnat that God designed that that particular swallow should snap up that particular gnat at that particular instant? I believe that the man and the gnat are in the same predicament. If the death of neither man nor gnat are designed, I see no reason to believe that their *first* birth or production should be necessarily designed." All through this reasoning he argues on the hypothesis that God must have used the lightning in the destruction of the man and the swallow in the death of the gnat with the same kind of purpose as that with which the sportsman uses his gun. This proves, I think, that he had not come to reflect on the notion of Deity without a remnant of Paleyism. He argued, as no other

* P. 313, "The mind refuses," down to p. 316, "existed in the moon."

† This is confirmed by a very emphatic confidence about Paley in a letter to Sir John Lubbock. Life, vol. ii. p. 219.

man had equal right to argue, against current conceptions of design in Nature and special providences in physical occurrences.* But the old habit of regarding God only as Providence, only as Designer, prevented him from seeing that, so far as God or the order of the universe is concerned, lightning, swallow, and sportsman stand precisely upon one level with regard to the good man, gnat, and pheasant they respectively destroy. The difficulties which lie in the way of regarding the universe as the sport of chance were manifest to Darwin. His reason demanded a supreme Law—a God of some sort; but Paley's extramundane God still haunted him, and prevented him from ever entertaining the notion that God may be Himself the supreme Law and Life of the universe. Would such a God be personal? Agnostics leaning to theism are not bound to answer that question. No theologies have made us comprehend what a personal God means. We do not know what personality actually is, either in ourselves or in any other being; yet the idea of God, regarded as the Law and Life of the universe—planned we know not how, and pursuing its development on paths beyond the ken of human senses and intelligence—accords with Darwin's own dictum:† "The theory of Evolution is quite compatible with the belief in a God."

THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE.

NOTHING is known by human beings which is not in the consciousness of collective or individual humanity—in the mind of the race or of the person.

What this means is, that man cannot get outside himself, cannot leap off his own shadow, cannot obtain a conception of

* See in particular p. 309, "Although I did not think," down to "which the wind blows."

† P. 307.

the universe except as a mode of his own consciousness. He is man, and must accept the universe as apprehended by his manhood.

It does not therefore follow that what man knows *is* the universe. It does not follow that man's sense and thought create the outer world. It does not even follow that the laws of human consciousness are the laws of Being. The utmost we are justified in saying is, that man forms an integral part of the world, and that his consciousness is consequently a substantial portion of the whole.

All that Philosophy can do is to analyse the mass of human thoughts and feelings, to ascertain the limits within which we apprehend the world, and to show the direction in which our faculties may be applied. Philosophy must abandon ontological explanations of the universe. These have invariably proved their own futility, being successively left behind and superseded in the progress of relative science, by which is meant the development of human thought and knowledge about the world.

The science of God and the science of Being, Theology and Ontology, have no foundation except in the subjectivity of man. Both are seen to involve impertinences, naïvetés, solemn self-complacences, the egotism of Narcissus doting on his own perfections mirrored in the darkness of the river of the universe.

This does not preclude a sincere belief in man's power to obtain partial knowledge of the world. Such knowledge, so far as it goes, rests on a firm basis; for man is, *ex hypothesi*, an integer in the universe, and his consciousness accordingly represents a factor of the universal order. The mistake of theology and of ontology is to transfer this partial knowledge to the account of the whole. These self-styled sciences are only doing what polytheism and mythology did. They are attempting to account for the whole by the experience of a part of it, which experience varies according to the stages of the growth of the creature we call man.

It may be demanded of me, then, why, holding these views,

professing the Agnostic creed, I speak of God as Law, brought back to us by modern science?

The answer is simple. It rests upon the root-conception that man, in all his qualities, but most essentially in the highest part of him, his mind, forms a real portion of the world. Being a portion, he cannot apprehend the whole: to do that was the pretension of theologians and ontologists. Yet this part, this man, raised to self-consciousness, increasing always in his grasp on partial knowledge, is brought continually more and more into the presence of a Force, a Life, a Being, call it what you will, which he is bound to recognise and worship as the essence which fashioned him and which keeps him in existence.

Man has the right to use time-honoured language, and to designate his apprehension of the unity in Nature by that venerable title, God. He is only doing now what all the men from whom he is descended did before him. Mumbo Jumbo, Indra, Shiva, Jahve, Zeus, Odin, Balder, Christ, Allah—what are these but names for the Inscrutable, adapted to the modes of thought which gave them currency? God is the same, and His years do not change. It is only our way of presenting the unknown to human imagination which varies.

We are at liberty to leave God out of our account, and to maintain that we can do without that hypothesis. But how shall we then stand? We must remain face to face with the infinite organism of the universe, which, albeit we can never know it in itself, is always being presented to our limited intelligence as more completely and organically one. The mystery flies before us, and will ever fly. The more we say we know, and the more we really know, the less can we afford to omit the elements of unsearchableness and awe-inspiring unity which have produced religions.

In these circumstances we are led back to the primitive conditions of human thought. We still must acknowledge a power from which we spring, which includes all things, which is the real reality of all we partly grasp by knowledge. Evade

it as we will, we are driven to the conclusion, at which the earliest men arrived, that human intelligence alone is insufficient to account for the universe, and that there is a Something beyond, with which man is indissolubly connected, and which has to be approached in the spirit of devotion. This Something, now as then, compels reverence and inspires awe. We may call it God or not as we think fit. Meanwhile it subsists—the one paramount fact, in comparison with which all other facts are unimportant. It is variously envisaged by successive generations, according to the tenor of their sensibilities and the nature of their speculation. Was there ever, or is there now, any other God but this?

The augmentation of knowledge only increases our sense of the reality and inscrutability of Being. Science and Agnosticism are therefore paths whereby we are brought back to religion under forms adapted to present conceptions of the world we live in, and of which we are a part.

To these reflections I append (without fear of trespass) some verses, in which the same thoughts have found emotional utterance. They were suggested by the problems of death and doubtful immortality, than which none other rack the heart of man in his impotence and ignorance more cruelly:

Since none returns to us upon the way
Which leads through darkness to the land of light,
What of that perilous journey can we say?

Nothing. We watch the frost of sickness blight
Our darlings; blood and nerve with age grow weak;
And sleep prepares our soul for endless night.

Were it not well to take our ease, nor seek
An answer to the question all will ask?
Against the bars of pitiless death we break

Those soaring wings, which no ethereal task
Of poet or of sage hath taught to stoop.
Surely 'twere well beneath the sun to bask,

Like flowers to bloom, like flowers to fade and droop,
Drinking the dews of morning and of eve.
Rank after rank dim generations troop

Down to the grave. The very rose we weave
Into a garland for the brow we love,
Has blood within it; to the petals cleave

The scent and hues of human clay. Above
Yon mountain tops, what once were tears distil
In fleecy rain, making the streams whereof

Men drink. Oh, cease with weak, persistent will
To storm the heights of nature. 'Tis enough
That living, suffering, we must climb the hill.

Make the plain ways of life less stern and rough;
Build not cloud-castles on the inconstant air;
Nor strive in vain to cast the viperous slough

Of fate that clings around these limbs so fair.
Kiss the rod rather; learn to face the doom
Which we with all things that live beauty share.

The world we breathe in is a chrysolite,
No chance, no dreadful drift of dateless days
May tarnish. Those long ages infinite

Which wafted us over unfooted ways,
When from dim whirling vapour sun and earth,
And all the spheres that in their cycles blaze,

Grew into being with a gradual birth,
These shall endure, though all men 'neath the sod
Turn a deaf ear alike to grief and mirth.

We know not elsewhere any other God
Than that which permeates the living whole,
Alike in sentient clay and senseless clod.

Call it Power, Motion, Life, Creator, Soul,
There is no name for force that over nerve
And granite sweeps with absolute control.

Compelling germs invisible and curve
Of comet to the one resistless law,
Wherefrom the noblest creature cannot swerve,

Nay, nor the meanest. Overmastering awe
Sublimes the sort of man that thinks and feels,
When toward the source of life he never saw,

With genuflection meek he trembling steals,
Divining in the void a Yea and Nay,
Godhood akin to Manhood, which reveals

Beyond the night of death a dawn of day.
Nor blame we man, if mid the weltering sea
That rings him round with impotent dismay,

He crowd those chasms of immensity
With phantoms of his own frail thought, and cry
To what seems loftiest in things low as he.

It may be that we shall not surely die:
It may be that the powers to whom we pray,
Are waiting in the calm crystalline sky

To breathe by death these clouds of life away.
Yet were it wasteful, think you, in the span
Of endless things, if what was once mute clay,

Should for some few years be a vocal man,
Then turn to inarticulate dust again?
Look up. 'Tis night. The ceaseless caravan

Of stars innumerous across the plain
Of heaven, we know not whence, we know not whither,
In long continuous procession strain.

Add glasses to your aching eyes, and wither
The sense of seeing with perpetual toil:
In those faint films a million globes together

Stream onward; deep by deep, the skies recoil;
And all the unpeopled gulfs with suns are rife.
Then ere your spirit falters, trim the oil

In midnight lamps; peruse the hidden strife
One drop of water, like a mimic world,
Constrains within its sphere; the throbbing strife,

The palpitating blood-beats. Life is hurled
Hither and thither reckless on the tide
Of Being: yet the basest worm encurled

Within a tortured sinew hath not died
Save by some dread immutable decree.
Life's continuity no flaws divide,

Nor lapse, nor languor. On the restless sea,
Whereof our souls are waves a little while,
There is no room for death : it cannot be.

Here cease ; aspire no more ; seek not to pile
Dust of delusion on your heart's despair.
Faith, Instinct, Science, Hope, can but beguile

Your ignorance with guesses light as air.
It may be, is your limit. Life may be
But Thought, your Thought, the terrible and fair,

Clasping the universe inviolably ;
And you, victorious in the overthrow
Of all that clogs and cramps mortality,

May be as God. Him, knowing not, we know :
Him from the blackness of our self's abyss
We cry to, when the shadows round us grow.

This hope is yours ; but ah, you know not this !

NOTES ON THEISM.

I.

It is possible for a man to be a theist in the etymological sense of that word, *i.e.* one who feels that the whole of his own and the world's interests are bound up with the idea of Theos —God—and yet not to acknowledge himself a theist in the sense given to the word by professed theists, such as the Rev. Mr. Voysey, who lifts his voice in England now.

I am not prepared to predicate so much of God as they do ; nor do I think that we have arrived at that stage of knowledge in which a new definition, satisfying human needs and authoritative for human wills, can be given to the complex notion Deity. Unless the idea of God should ultimately be eliminated from the stock of human concepts, it must be remoulded to suit the changes which have taken place in our theory of the

universe. The time is still far off before that can be effected; and the process, if it is to lead to serious belief, must be a very gradual and instinctive act of assimilation carried on in the minds of multitudes and masses.

Meanwhile professed theists seem to retain more of the theological systems they are undermining than is justified by logic. They ought surely to abstain from such ways of thought as find expression in phraseology like "God's purposes,' "God works out His gracious ends." To attribute personality to God is to attribute something which has significance only in relation to man's phenomenal existence. This does not prevent us from believing that mind and moral consciousness are somehow essential factors in the universe; for this reason, that we find them present and paramount in man—*i.e.* in the only portion of the universe we are really acquainted with. But we are not hereby pledged to the corollary that God must be a *Person*, a *righteous Judge*, a *loving Ruler*, a *Father*. The words I have italicised cease to be significant when we pass in imagination beyond the range of human relationship.

Theism, like Unitarianism, is a necessary phase in the process of disintegration, which must be gone through before the new process of assimilation and integration can commence. It is our duty to regard with deep interest and respect all attempts to base religion upon sounder foundations, all schemes for facilitating the transition from mythological Christianity without loss of religious fervour, all efforts to accommodate the sanctities of religious reverence with the earnestness of scientific seeking after truth, all heart-felt endeavours to worship God, "not on this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem," but literally "in spirit and in truth."

II.

What sensible man can doubt that we must, for the present, at all events, acquiesce in suspension of judgment with regard to the nature of the Supreme Being?

Let us remember that all attempts to present God to the imaginative reason have been, are, and will ever be nothing

better than symbols of an unknown, unknowable power. This will render the exercise of patience, now demanded from us as the proof of faith, more easy. What we are called upon to do, is to get on as well as we can through life and in death, not indeed without faith, but without the definite symbolic forms which made faith comfortable to our forefathers.

The revolution in all our conceptions of the world which has been performed during the last three centuries is so tremendous, that no dogmatic theology of any sort can gain a hold upon our minds. At this stage, it is surely enough if, having displaced the old conception of an extra-mundane Creator, who governed a universe which had man for its centre, we have not thereby abandoned the belief in God. *Quis Deus incertum : est Deus.* Let us, in reverence and humility, retain our religious attitude. Let us, so far as we are able, refer our aspirations to God, as the only Life, the only Love, the only Law, the ground of all Reality, the source of all Being. So long as we do this, we keep alive the sacred flame in Vesta's temple of the human heart, and march in the procession of saints, martyrs, and confessors. What must of necessity remain at present blank and abstract in our idea of God may possibly again be filled up and rendered concrete when the human mind is prepared for a new synthesis of faith and science That, in its turn, will have to be decomposed like older, simpler syntheses; and so forth perpetually, until the inevitable day of *Götter-Dämmerung*, the day of dying for our planet, comes. Meanwhile for man, through all these transformations of the religious idea, abides one motto fixed : τοὺς ζῶντας εὖ ὁρᾶν, "while living do thy duty." *

* These words were written before the publication of Darwin's Life, vol. i. p. 307. See p. 281, above.

III.

What constitutes a theist in this age is that a man should be prepared to render up himself in faith and submission to God—that is, to the order of the world, however little he may hope to understand it, and whatever his lot in it may have to be. Different ages, involving different states of knowledge and different experiences of human life, are forced to regard the one all-being, all-sustaining inscrutable God in divers ways. David did not invent his God, nor Sophocles his, nor St. Paul his, nor Cleanthes his, nor Marcus Aurelius his, nor Mahomet his. No; God was found by these men, revealed to these men, thus and thus and thus. Yet some discoveries, some revelations of God, are more consistent with the contemporary possibilities of Theism than others. It is easier for us to cry with David: "O put thy trust in God; for I will yet give Him thanks, who is the help of my countenance and my God!" It is easier for us to say with Sophocles: "Oh, that my lot may lead me in the path of holy innocence of word and deed, the path which august laws ordain, laws that in the highest empyrean had their birth, of which Heaven is the father alone, neither did the race of mortal men beget them, nor shall oblivion ever put them to sleep. The power of God is mighty in them, and groweth not old."* It is easier for us to pray with Cleanthes: "Lead thou me, God, and thou Law, the daughter of God, whithersoever I am by you appointed to go; for I will follow unreluctant; or should I refuse through sin or cowardice upgrown in me, none the less shall I follow." It is easier to exclaim with Marcus Aurelius: "Everything harmonises with me which is harmony to thee, O Universe! Nothing for me is too early nor too late which is in due time for thee. Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature! from thee are all things, in thee are all things, to thee all things return. The poet says, 'Dear city of Cecrops;' and wilt not

* Translated by Mr. Matthew Arnold.

thou say, 'Dear city of God'?"* It is easier, I repeat, to think and feel with these men than to cast our all of faith upon the die thrown by St. Paul: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain." It is not true that we are "of all men most miserable," even though Christ be not risen, even though we shall not rise. Utterances like this of St. Paul, however serviceable they may have been in a past age, lead mankind awry now from the more virile religion, the purer, the deeper, the more indestructible, which bids men trust in God even though he slay them, body and soul.

"Vain, shallow, and unthinking optimist! Inconclusive agnostic! You reject St. Paul's theism. Well, but how will the theism of your chosen prophets sound the bottomless abysses shown to us by modern science? They knew nothing of those immeasurable gulfs and distances, that time, that space, those unhomely haunts of human thought with nothing human in them—of all such things they knew nothing at all, your David, Sophocles, Cleanthes, Marcus Aurelius. You, who have the insight granted by three centuries of exploration, how is your theism going to deal with the incalculable æons of the cosmic origins—inanimate chaos, slowly stirring into fiery strife of gaseous vortices and clashing atoms—the tardy concentration of sidereal systems, in furious combustion first, then cooling to white-furnace glow, then building solid planets with their crust of rock and spilth of water, half-dead themselves, but heated by fire belched from the living sun; the long, stern struggle for existence among things which breathe upon our tiny globe; the procession of species evolved by laws of which they were unconscious, doomed successively to supersede and to exterminate the weaker? How will your theism square with this? Next, how will any theism, yours or your prophets', or St. Paul's, or Mahomet's, or Buddha's, adapt itself to the facts of human experience—to the omnipresence of evil and disease, to the

* Translated by Dr. George Long.

dreadful lives lived by the majority of men since men appeared upon this planet, to the anguished misery of captives and convicts, to the clash between natural appetite and social law, to the morbid torments of moral madness and slow-fretting physical cancers, to the unutterable lusts and cruelties and loathsomeness of your own heart, to the dumb, blind, ignorant agonies of dread and longing and self-accusation and hopeless helplessness with which you labour in the dark night-watches, before which you quail in the presence of cold, implacable nature-forces? How will your theism adapt itself to this? Is it not ridiculous for you to prate of God? Nay, the superior personalities, whom you imagine to exist, scale over scale, ascending immeasurably far above you in the hierarchy of life, are they not also under the same doom as you, creatures of the same relentless law, enveloped in the same impermeable gloom of ignorance and futile yearning?"

I have often listened to this voice, and said not a word. There is no answer. But the soul is illogical, indomitable, unconquerable, haughtily affronting fate, knowing itself to be the last and best thing knowable by men, in spite of all these desolating, dread-inspiring, freezing, heart-breaking billows of the infinite which surge around its rock in darkness. Poor, illogical, indomitable soul of man! She cries to God in the world-storm, yields to God, drowns in God, finds no other God than this.

Καλεῖ δ' ἀκούοντας οὐδὲν
Ἐν μέσῃ δυσπαλεῖ τε δίνῃ.

"Nay, but the soul cries to those who listen not, caught in the clutches of whirlpools with which it were too vain to wrestle. Who hath heard God speak? To whom hath God responded?" Perchance that is the fact. Perchance none listens. Perchance the whirlpools will close over us and suck us down. If there is a God, we shall not cry in vain. If there is none, the struggle of life shall not last through all eternity. Self, agonised and tortured as it is, must now repose on this alternative.

THE CRITERION OF ART.

In works of art, only what is in a true sense human will be found finally good and permanent. It must be agreeable to the normal perceptions of human beings who are capable of understanding and appreciating art. The test of excellence must be a common sense or agreement of opinion between normal men and women gifted with *αἴσθησις* or sensuous perception.

It may, parenthetically, be remarked that all perception is sensuous. We cannot perceive the truth that two and two make four without acquiring experience of duality through one or other of the senses. We cannot grasp the meaning of language without the help of hearing, of eyesight, of sense of touch. By far the larger number of our expressions for mental or æsthetic qualities, as *taste*, *goût*, *gusto*, *Geschmack*, *flair*, *judo*, *tact*, *sensibility*, *comprehension*, are transferred from the region of the senses and used metaphorically.

The common perception of normal men and women, who are not insensible to beauty, not impervious to ideas, will ultimately decide the question whether any work of art is first rate, second rate, or worthless.

This common perception is not the sense of the majority at any moment. Contemporaries are notoriously inadequate to judge with accuracy. It was only a small minority who appreciated Shelley and Keats in their lifetime.

It is not even the sense of the whole world at any given epoch. For instance, we are now sure that Gothic architecture possesses eminent qualities; and in the fourteenth century no other style was considered beautiful. But Palladio and Wren, with the consent of all cultivated persons in Europe, judged it barbarous. What is there in common between L. B. Alberti and Pugin on the subject of pointed architecture?

Each individual has but a limited perceptive faculty, and

this is still further limited by the prevalent taste of the age in which he lives.

It follows that a final verdict regarding works of art can only be arrived at very slowly, and after considerable variations of opinion among those even who are the best qualified to judge. The consensus regarding Homer, Pheidias, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, now amounts to certainty. The agreement about a poet like D. G. Rossetti has not reached that point. A man who utters authoritative opinions for or against Rossetti carries the weight only of his own perception, backed up in either case by the perceptions of a limited number of men who feel like him. In the long-run, Rossetti will be definitely placed by the accumulation of such perceptions.

The greatest art communicates the greatest amount of satisfaction to the greatest number of normal human beings through the greatest length of time. Inferior art, the art of a Marino in poetry or of a Bernini in sculpture, may enjoy temporary applause. But even during the *furore* it creates, men of pure and trained perception will recognise its inferiority to the art of Ariosto and Michel Angelo. Art of first-rate quality may never win more than limited applause, because it appeals to highly specialised perceptions; but it is sure, in the lapse of ages, to win "fit audience, though few." Popularity implies the adaptation of the work to aggregate perceptions. Really corrupt art is only adapted to corrupt perceptions, and in a corrupt age it may be popular. It cannot maintain this popularity, for the final court of appeal is the Areopagus of sound and normal human beings. These will unanimously reject Marino and accept Shakespeare. They may differ about Rossetti; yet it is much to have obtained a minority of votes from the Areopagus.

I will conclude with a simile. The final verdict about works of art and men of genius may be compared to one of those composite photographs (devised by Mr. Francis Galton*) which are obtained by the superposition, one above the other,

* "Inquiries into Human Faculty," p. 340.

of many negatives taken from different individuals. Each separate face has left its filmy impress on the composite photograph; and all the faces have contributed to form a type—the type of a criminal, the type of a consumptive person, the type of a certain family. Blurred in some of its outlines and details as the ultimate result may be, such a composite photograph has an unmistakable generic individuality, which is even more instructive, even more convincing for the student of criminal, consumptive subject, specific family, than the mere aggregate of single photographs which compose it. It yields, not the person, but the type. Even so the final verdict of criticism is the total result of countless personal judgments, superimposed, the one above the other, coalescing in their points of agreement, shading off into blurred outlines at points of disagreement, but combining to produce a type which is an image of fundamental truth.

NOTE ON "REALISM AND IDEALISM."

THE inevitable infusion of a subjective element into every attempt made by men to reproduce nature, on which I have insisted with reference to figurative art, may be still further illustrated. It appears in all reports made by credible witnesses of events which have been noticed by them. A precisely identical account cannot be expected by ten witnesses of the same occurrence, though each has been anxious to relate the literal truth. Furthermore, it is impossible to obtain exactly similar reports of such reports from every ten veracious persons who have heard one or more of them from the lips of original witnesses. Thus the element of subjectivity in the primary reports is multiplied in the secondary accounts transmitted of the fact. When there

exists a strong subjective prepossession on the part of the witness, then the event becomes spontaneously idealised in a definite direction. The concurrence of several such subjective prepossessions, colouring the report of an event which is extremely interesting to all the witnesses concerned, results in an ideal which comes to be accepted for the literal fact.

This is perhaps the proper explanation of miraculous occurrences attested by fairly good evidence. The genesis of those potent ideals which give force to religions may, in like manner, be referred to subjective faculties exercised by many witnesses in sympathy. We find it difficult, for example, to interpret the Gospels without postulating the existence of an historical Christ. But given that basis of reality, the large element of idealism in the Gospels can be comprehended by this hypothesis of subjective intervention without ascribing *mala fides* to the witnesses. In the redaction of several parallel reports to one coherent narrative, the subjective element was not eliminated, but intensified and harmonised upon certain lines. The ideal which formed a factor in each separate report obtained substantiality. In this way four main ideal portraits of Christ were produced, which have been subsequently elaborated into one highly idealised conception by the slow continuous process of centuries.

II.

Another instance might be chosen from a different region. History has been contemptuously called the chronicle of lies and illusions. In so far as this is true, it results from the impossibility of seeing facts except through our own senses and the reports of other persons. The data of history arrive to us coloured by subjectivity; and the historian, eager as he may be to eliminate the truth, judges the material he has to deal with through the medium of his personal impressibility. Thus a contemporary history, like Kinglake's "Crimean War," cannot be written without bias. The greater the art-work, the more energetic the attempt to realise, the keener the effort to extract

act from inferences and statistics, the more imaginative and idealistic will the product be. In this way we are led to the conclusion that the past can never be known to us except in its broadest, simplest outlines. The crossing, blending, intermingling, and quasi-chemical combination of divers subjectivities which any chapter of history implies, render the attempt to each pure truth impossible. Yet we must not, therefore, on his account, despair of history. Persistent endeavour in the direction of reality, in the sublimation and elimination of subjective elements, brings us to a residuum which has at least its own generic authenticity.

III.

In other departments of literature, notably in romance and fiction, the same principles hold good. We have heard much lately of realistic novels. But even Zola, with his notebook and his catalogues of objects, is compelled to idealise, because he cannot seize reality except as a mode of his own sensuous and mental being. There are as many ways of perceiving and conceiving fact as there are individuals. A novel cannot be the exact representation of reality, because it must be the representation of what some human being finds in reality. This has been tersely and vigorously put by M. Guy de Maupassant in the preface to his "Pierre et Jean."* "How childish, moreover," he exclaims, "to believe in reality, since we each carry our own in our thought and in our organs! Our eyes, our ears, our sense of smell, of taste, differing from one person to another, create as many truths as there are men upon earth. And our minds, taking instruction from these organs, so diversely impressed, understand, analyse, judge, as if each of us belonged to a different race. Each one of us, therefore, forms for himself an illusion of the world; and the writer has no other mission than to reproduce faithfully this illusion, with

* I quote from Mr. Henry James's translation, *Fortnightly Review*, March, 1888, p. 366.

all the contrivances of art that he has learned and has at his command."

In the main, this doctrine carries conviction. Yet M. de Maupassant must be taken to task for one or two exaggerated statements. It is not childish to believe in reality because the individual cannot perceive it or reproduce it without the admixture of his subjectivity. It is not true that there are as many truths as there are men upon the earth; else the delusions of maniacs, who mistake a wreath of yellow paper for a crown of gold, or a dirty cotton gown for the bridal robe of a daughter of Zion, would be truths; else colour-blindness would rank on equal terms with complete vision. Nor conversely is it true that the conceptions which we each of us form of the world are merely illusions. The fact is, that we do believe in reality, although we admit our inability to seize it or express it except in terms of our own thought and senses. The fact is, that we are capable of distinguishing normal from abnormal impressions of reality, and that only the former have any lasting value for us. The fact is, that while we recognise a certain element of inadequacy, a certain admixture of illusion, in all subjective perceptions and in all subjective renderings of reality, we are well aware that some are nearer to the truth than others. Dante's and Shakespeare's, Raphael's and Pheidias's impressions of reality, though tinctured with subjective colours, appeal to our sense of truth more forcibly than Marino's and Cyril Tourneur's, than Fuseli's and Bernini's. If it were not so, criticism would be impossible, and humanity would have to renounce its claim to common sense. The pursuit of knowledge, even of such relative knowledge as mankind can hope for, would have to be abandoned as absurd. We should not be able to communicate with one another in the expectation of being understood. We should be precluded from legislating for the common benefit of society. The human race would be reduced to an aggregation of isolated world-making monads.

Truth lies in the avoidance of paradoxical extremes. Full recognition of the play of subjectivity in individuals must not

ind us to the fact that, over and above and independent of is subjectivity, we are conscious of a standard relation to ality, by reference to which we are enabled to form judg- ents. The race is larger than the individuals which compose ; and constant appeal must be made to the common from the ersonal perception.

This being the case, criticism finds, when it surveys the veral products of any marked historical epoch, that they resent more notes of similarity than of difference. The notes f difference belong to individual artists ; the notes of similarity elong to the period which produced them, and the tribe from hich they sprang. Having ascertained the specific note belonging to a particular epoch, criticism compares this with the note of other equally differentiated epochs. At this point the generic note emerges, that which constitutes humanity at large. From such studies, whereby a standard has been gained, criticism returns to the consideration of species and particulars. The specific falls into its place of relation to the generic, and the individual is inspected as subordinated to the species which he helps to integrate.

Subjectivity holds sway throughout the process. The particular sees reality through the spectacles of self. The species sees it through spectacles of race and period. Mankind sees it through spectacles of generic human properties. Neither particular, nor species, nor yet genus eliminates the subjective element or reproduces reality. Transmutation into human stuff or idealisation is the condition under which man works.

NOTE ON "THE MODEL."

THE female form has less variety than the male. It cannot symbolise so many modes of vigorous existence. There are several positions which it cannot assume with grace—as in the act of running, the spreading abroad of the limbs, and wherever the belly and pelvis are extended by physical effort. Raphael, in his drawing of Roxana visited by Alexander, and in his fresco of Venus rising in her car upon the Farnesina ceiling, adopted graceless female attitudes. No Greek artist, so far as I remember, fell into this fault of showing how the female figure sprawls. The Greeks took pains to drape or partially drape women in their statues; or when they modelled the nude, they selected attitudes of self-restrained repose or of marked sexual suggestiveness—attitude of self-restraint in the Venus de' Medici, attitude of sexual suggestiveness in the Venus Accroupie.

If we divest ourselves of sexual associations, we shall recognise that the male is more ready-made in plastic quality to the artist's hand, more capable of varied posturing, more representative of human energies and activities. It requires less management in order to bring out its qualities and tone down its defects.

On the other side, the female presents finer suavities of contour, higher elements of voluptuousness. There are numerous modes of emotion—all the tender, imploring, shrinking, languishing, seductive, yielding, timid, wavering modes—which the female expresses, and which are inappropriate to the male.

The activity of the male, the passivity of the female, are seen in their respective physical types. The male is classical, the female romantic. The male is sculpturesque, the female musical.

Thus it is chiefly when the body is used as an index of

human activity, vigorous capacity, ebullient passion, solid strength, that the male predominates in art. Organically, as an instrument of action, it is far more potent and more varied in resources.

But when we use the body as the index of human susceptibilities, sensibilities, allurements, in this less active and less intellectual region the female asserts predominance.

Michel Angelo treated the female nude (especially in his Night and Dawn at San Lorenzo) in the male key; and obtained some noticeable tragic effects therefrom.

Praxiteles treated the male nude (especially in his Apollo Sauroktonos and the Neapolitan torso of Bacchus) in the female key, and obtained some noticeable sensuous effects therefrom.

Artists of a (i.) distinctly intellectual order, like Michel Angelo and Signorelli, use the male nude for decorative purposes — roof of Sistine Chapel, arabesques at Orvieto. Artists of a (ii.) sensual type, like Correggio, use either the hermaphroditic male for decorative purposes (Parma cupolas) or the female; as indeed do all decorators of theatres, baths, places of enjoyment built for men. The first class of artists appeal to a sublime and abstract sense of form; the second, to natural instincts.

Draughtsmen like Bartolozzi have treated the male and female nude together in a mixed key, sacrificing the essential qualities of each, not to an animal desire, but to a flaccid sentiment, which marks the decadence of art. This is not the case with antique hermaphroditic statues. These consciously confuse the male and female keys, employing a Mixo-Lydian mood, for purposes of undisguised voluptuousness.

The colourist gets silvery tones from the female, tawny tones from the male; smooth surfaces and soft chiaroscuro from the female, abrupt lights and shades with angular modelling of surface from the male.

He does best who utilises these sexual differences by properly accentuating the contrasts of male and female. But a Guido

may give us a middle region for the male, which is the region of adolescence. See his Samson at Bologna. Praxiteles again may do the like. See his Hermes at Olympia, where adolescence, not hermaphroditism, is suggested. To go beyond this in attributing female qualities of tone and surface to the male is hazardous, though it is sometimes very effective, as, for instance, in Bazzi's St. Sebastian.

PRIORITY OF THOUGHT TO LANGUAGE.

It is a pernicious delusion to suppose that language creates thought more than thought creates language. The contrary is true. This may be exemplified from the Platonic philosophy. Plato saw that in language there were both *good* and *goodness*, particular and abstract quality of good. He rightly inferred an idea corresponding to the abstract, and recognised *goodness* as a thought expressed by language. Upon this perception he founded his theory of ideas. What is weak in that theory is the extension of abstract thought expressed in language to thoughts which have no abstract equivalents in language. He saw there was an idea of *goodness* as apart from *good*; so he said there was an idea of *horseness* as apart from *horse*. Here, instead of language creating thought, thought seeks to create a language not in use among men. That is an extreme instance. But it might amply be shown that thought, in all its complex stages, forces language in order to obtain expression. The phraseology of metaphysics, from Aristotle downwards, abounds in examples of the concrete being warped to serve the abstract. After asserting this, I do not deny the reflex action of language upon thought, the fettering of thought by language which has once been fixed, and very often badly fixed, to adumbrate some stage of painfully emergent thought. Metaphorical expressions of all sorts, indicating the shifts of thought to find utterance, are instances. But these confirm the view that thought is prior to language.

COLOUR-SENSE AND LANGUAGE.

The sense of colour cannot be judged by colour-nomenclature.

People, in a primitive state of society, may be acutely sensitive to colours, as indeed they have all their senses in fine working order, and yet may have no names to denote the shades of hues.

That is due mainly to the fact that colours are not connected with utility. The brain is lazy, and only coins words which are necessary. It can dispense with a wide vocabulary for pigments, since these involve no grave concerns of life or business.

Suppose the currency were established, not on varying weights of precious metals, but on varying tints of red, blue, yellow; then we should soon find a nomenclature springing up to denote the finest gradations of those colours.

That is not the case. In the early stages of civilisation, colour involves neither affairs of life and death, nor affairs of property. Language, therefore, leaves it alone, at least such language as enters into literature.

Xenophanes describes the rainbow by the simplest generic words:

> *πορφύρεον καὶ φοινίκεον καὶ*
> *χλωρὸν ἰδέσθαι.*

But while this scientific man was so describing it, practical workmen were weaving all the colours of the rainbow into Athene's peplus. Those workmen must have known how to ask for dyes at the colour-man's. Perhaps they used phrases like *venetian red*, *chrome yellow*, *vermilion*, *spinach's comis*, *cadmium*, *burnt sienna*, *vandyke brown*, *aurelia d'oro*, *umber*, *peacock blue*; phrases, that is to say, which even now scarcely show their heads in literature.

Persian poetry affords a parallel instance. It deals with colour broadly, by generalities, by salient tones arresting simple attention. Yet Persian carpets exhibit the finest blending of the most subtly matched and graduated tints. And the older

these carpets are, the more are they prized for their exquisite solution of problems in the art of colour.

With the advance of civilisation to the point which we have reached, the nomenclature of colours becomes more rich, but always, as it were, by haphazard. We talk of *pink*, *lilac*, *mauve*, *magenta*, *lemon*, *fawn*, *dove*, *peacock*, *gris de perle*, always using metaphors from natural objects, or the mere lingo of commerce. And even these words to express tints of colour are employed with diffidence in literature, although literature has grown reckless in its exercise of means for appealing through language to the intellect, and summoning up pictures for the mental eye.

We are at a different point with regard to colour from that which primitive peoples occupied. The art of painting, critically examined and reflected on, has forced us to distinguish hues. Widely extended commerce in articles of dress and furniture has made its language current. Literature has passed into a descriptive and pictorial stage. Science has drawn attention to the value which colours possess for the discrimination of substances and the analysis of tissues. Lastly, we have discovered that our lives and deaths depend on colour-blindness, through the employment of coloured lights as railway signals.

It would be little short of miraculous if, under these influences, the susceptibility to tints of colours, and the corresponding nomenclature to denote them, were not largely augmented.

Our experience, however, must not make us draw a wrong conclusion from the poverty of language to express colour in earlier ages of civilisation. As it is, we have no proper nomenclature—only such as we pick up from commerce and the colour-men. The shifts we submit to in order to communicate sensations of colour ought rather to teach us that in the Homeric or other early ages colours were fully appreciated by the senses, but had not found their analogues in language.

THE END

CHARLES DICKES AND EVANS, CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.

824/SYM
11322